Who was Shivaji?

Propaganda:

Shivaji was a Protector of Hindu Religion and Muslim hater.

Reality:

He was a king who was loved by the ryots (working people).

Ended loot of peasants by landlords:
Measured land, fixed the rates of taxation:
Exempted peasants from taxes during droughts:
Changed language of administration to Marathi.
Shivaji's orders to his soldiers:
Don't touch even a blade of vegetable of the farmers: pay in cash for whatever you take from them.

Did not discriminate on the basis of caste:

Personal bodyguard: Madari Mhetar:
Custodian of a fort: a Mahar:
Chief spy: Bahirjee, a Ramoshi;
Joint Chief of Navy: Maynak Bhandari;
Barber Shiva sacrificed himself to save Shivaji:

Mahatma Phule called him Kulwadi Bhushan.

Myths about Shivaji

Whence came Bhavani sword?
Protector of Cows and Brahmins?
Hindu Emperor?
Find the truth in this book.

Respected and protected women:

Ordered soldiers not to molest women of even enemies;
Punished Patil of Ranjha for raping a peasant girl.

Treated all religions equally:

Several of his generals were Muslims:
Chief of Navy: Daulat Khan;
Chief of Artillery: Ibrahim Khan;
Told his soldiers not to harm mosques or the Koran.

Were Shivaji's wars with Aurangzeb, Adilshah and Afzal Khan religious wars?

Aurangzeb's Sardar: Mirza Raje Jai Singh;
Adil Shah's Sardar: Shahaji Bhosale;
Siddhi Hilal fought with Shivaji against Rustam Zama:
Shivaji's Ambassador: Kazi Hyder:
Afzal Khan's Ambassador: Krishnaji Bhaskar Kulkarni.

Socialist Party (India)
LOKAYAT

Contribution: Rs. 20/-

WHO WAS SHIVAJI?

GOVIND PANSARE

SHOUT
SHARE
IT

Who was Shivaji?

Translation of "शिवाजी कोण होता?" by Govind Pansare
Translated by Uday Narkar

Printed and Published
for Lokayat and Socialist Party (India) by

Alka Joshi,
c/o Lokayat, 129 B/2,
Opposite Syndicate Bank,
Law College Road, Nal Stop,
Pune – 4

Printed at

R. S. Printers, 455, Shanivar Peth, Pune - 30

Contribution Price: Rs. 20/-

WHO WAS SHIVAJI?

GOVIND PANSARE

Translated by

UDAY NARKAR

Socialist Party (India)

JUSTICE P. B. SAWANT

HIGH COURT AT BOMBAY

Tel. [illegible] 23695
[illegible] 272152
Sarang, Flat No. 14
Cumbal Jagannath Bhosale Marg
Bombay 400 021

29th May 1988

Dear Govindrao

I read your book *Shivaji Kon Hota*. The progressive movement and society are indebted to you for having written this book. The book, in fact, should be read widely. Especially, it be taken to the youth caught in the trap of reactionaries. It is an urgent and very important task today. Even if it reaches, initially, only the main functionaries and activists of all the communal organizations, it will be a major achievement. I hope you'll consider this suggestion and plan accordingly. I am yet to read your other book.

More we shall discuss when we meet next.

Yours friendly
P. B. Sawant

When he wrote this letter, Justice P. B. Sawant was a Bombay High Court Judge. Soon after, he was appointed as a Supreme Court Justice.

- Author

Shivaji : King with a Difference

A lot has been written about Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj. Stories, novels, plays, tamashas, songs, ballads, history and biography : take any form of literature and you will find it depicting life and times of Shivaji, severally, and numerously. Not only that. Films have been produced and innumerable lectures and speeches delivered. The enterprise continues ceaselessly. In spite of this, one cannot say for sure that the image of Shivaji and his times emerging from this and as imbedded in popular imagination is consistent with the historical truth.

In 'Praise of a King' in Democracy!

The fact is that feudalism is now an obsolete social system. Shivaji belonged to feudal times; he was a king in such a system. Our country, like the entire world, has given up this system. People fought to abolish feudalism. Kings and lords were thrown into the dust bin of history and it was right to do so. It was also right that we replaced them by democracy. What happened to the kingdom founded by Shivaji after his death proves that feudalism was not a system that could be accepted and continued. The Indian Feudalism could not stand up to the progressive British capitalism. This once again shows that, as a social system, feudalism is dispensable and worth rejecting. But, then, why should a king be revered in democracy? What is there in that king's thinking, his practice and his life, that even his memory inspires us in this democratic age?

Not that there were not other kings. But all of them do not remain in our memory. Nobody celebrates the anniversaries of their birth or death. May be, their successors do it. It is

also possible that, at places, people of the area belonging to the erstwhile states celebrate it. However, such incidences are not as widespread and not as enthusiastically celebrated as in case of Shivaji. Why should it be so? What was so different about this king for this to happen?

In what ways did Shivaji differ from his contemporary kings? If we were to unlock the secret of Shivaji's life and times, we must try to comprehend his uniqueness.

Founder of a State

First and foremost, Shivaji was not one who simply succeeded to an already established throne. You do not need to do anything to inherit a legacy. There is nothing admirable about it. There were many who became kings by sheer inheritance. Shivaji was not one of such kings; he founded a new state. It is never easy to found a state, and it was more difficult in Shivaji's case. Yet, he did it. There is a great difference between ascending to a pre-existing throne and creating a new one by one's own efforts.

When Shivaji founded his state, his contemporaries were not even thinking about such a thing; let alone bring it into reality. One and all believed that the only mission of their life was to earn a place in the court of this emperor or that king by serving them loyally, by selling their honour to them and by somehow winning their confidence. It was in such times that Shivaji thought of establishing an independent state of his own, made a proper plan for it, implemented that plan and finally founded it.

Of course, Shivaji was not alone who founded a state. There were a few others. But even those handfuls have not earned the place of pride that Shivaji is so lovingly given by people in their hearts.

'Our Mission- Our State'

In what lies the difference between the work and state of Shivaji and those of others? The ryots, the common men and women living in his state, believed that it was 'their' mission that Shivaji had undertaken, that it was 'their' state that he had founded. Which is the best way of testing whether a state is

good or bad? The best state is that which the common people, the majority of the people living under that state, believe it to be so.

We live in a democracy. There are many other democratic countries. Do the people, majority of common people living in those democracies, feel that those are their own states? Do the majority of people believe what is taking place in their countries is for their good? For me, the honest answer is, no! Although these are democracies elected by people, the people are not convinced that whatever is happening in the name of democracy is done in their interest.

There is a good definition of state : A state is one, which 'emerges from people but is also increasingly alienated from them.'

Today's democratic state has emerged out of people and it is increasingly getting alienated from them. Of course, this is not to claim that feudalism of Shivaji's time was more progressive than democracy today. Three and a half centuries separate us from those times; feudalism is useless for us, and also whatever democracy we have in the present form is of little use to common people.

Inspiring Self-sacrifice

The ryots of that time believed that the work undertaken by Shivaji was their own work. They identified themselves with his mission. There are innumerable instances, which show this.

Siddi Johar and Fazal Khan, with a huge army and armory, had laid siege to the Fort Panhala. The noose was not loosened even a bit after months. Netaji Palkar, with the help of Siddi Hilal, attempted to break the siege. The attempt was frustrated. Chhatrapati's General, Chief of army, had to retreat, badly beaten. Loyal Siddi Hilal, who had tried to save his son, had fallen into the enemy's hands. Shivaji, trapped in the siege, could not find a way out. A plan was hatched to use the smallest of a chink in the siege escape away to the Fort Vishalgad. As part of this plan, a duplicate or dummy Shivaji was made ready. This dummy Shivaji sat in a palanquin and fell into the enemy's hands. Before he was identified, Siddi Johar had no clue that Shivaji had already escaped.

This dummy Shivaji was a poor barber called Shiva. Shiva barber very well knew what his fate would be. He was sure that he would be captured. He knew beyond doubt that he would be killed. Yet he took Shivaji's place; and, as expected, he was captured and killed.

Shiva barber embraced his death with open eyes, not with the hope of earning a reward, becoming a landlord. He firmly believed that die he might; Shivaji Raja must live. Shivaji's cause was his own cause. It was the ryots' cause. Shiva barber was convinced of this. And Shiva barber was not alone in such conviction.

Shivaji Maharaj escaped from Panhala. Siddi Johar got alerted and chased Shivaji. The fate of Shivaji would have certainly doomed, had Siddi caught up with him before he had reached the Fort Vishalgad. But they had to cross a pass at Ghodkhind and Baji Prabhu Deshpande stood in the pass with handful of mavlas - Maratha soldiers. He and his comrades were prepared to lay their lives so that Maharaj got enough time to reach Vishalgad. The inevitable did happen. Baji Prabhu fell. Several mavlas were massacred. These brave ones have remained anonymous even to history.

Why did Baji Prabhu and those anonymous mavlas fight to death? The same conviction: One would even embrace death so that Shivaji would live, he could fulfill the mission he had undertaken. It was such a noble mission that they would happily die for it. This was their conviction.

History has recorded numerous such instances. Shivaji Maharaj had to concede defeat against Mirza Raja Jai Singh, a satrap loyal to Shehen Shah Aurang Zeb. Shivaji had gone to Agra to present himself in Aurang Zeb's court after having accepted humiliating terms of truce dictated by Mirza Raja Jai Singh. Aurangazeb put Shivaji into prison. No way out of Agra confinement could be seen. Once again he thought of a clever trick and escaped. Two persons remained behind. One lay in bed disguised as Shivaji. The other sat massaging his feet. The plot was designed in such a way that Shivaji would get enough time to get away as far as possible before the act of his disappearance came to light.

Who were those who chose to remain behind, to face certain death? They were Madari Mehtar and Hiroji Farjand. It was more than certain that the plot would be revealed, sooner or later. Were Madari and Hiroji not aware that they would be arrested and killed ruthlessly? Of course, they were; yet, why were they prepared to embrace death? Once again, the same answer. The task undertaken by Shivaji was invaluable. It had to be successfully completed; it had to be sustained. Whatever offerings were required, had to be given.

Raja Shivaji performed a miracle: a miracle, which made his followers believe that his life was more important than theirs. They might die for his life. Other kings could not perform this miracle. Of course, it was not that there were not many who fought for those kings. Sure, many died fighting for those kings. But they died to earn wealth or fiefdom, or both. Theirs was not a sacrifice for a noble cause.

Not only warriors participated in Shivaji's mission. More importantly, the common ryots, peasants, did their bit for a greater cause. When the ryots participate in a cause, that cause is certain to succeed. It succeeds because it no more remains the cause of a king alone. It becomes the common cause of all.

This historic truth, people's participation in the formation of the swaraj, is recorded in simple language and direct appeal in a ballad, "Be warned, A gallop ahead, and I finish you in smithereens..."

The bard is here singing of an insignificant incident. It is a time of great commotion. Leave alone soldiers, even a peasant tilling his land is very alert. He keeps a keen eye on soldiers passing by. Whose camp do they belong to? If anybody is found sabotaging the great cause of the swaraj, he must be confronted.

Four riders are about to cross the fence. It is at this instance that a boy of tender age, 10-12 years of age, (still green behind ears!) accosts them and warns, 'Halt! Otherwise, I'll cut you into pieces. Who are you? Where are you going?' This tiny tot challenges the armed cavalrymen. Fear doesn't touch him. He too believes that he must do this. This is my

job. Raja Shivaji is doing something good, I must take part in it. The bard reveals later that the soldier who this child is threatening is Shivaji himself. He has never seen Shivaji before. He does not know the king; he does not know what it means to lend a helping hand to Shivaji, yet he does it, ignoring the obvious threat.

Shivaji succeeded in generating such feelings among his colleagues, his soldiers and the ryots. In this lies his difference.

Extraordinarily heroic deeds are performed while fighting for attaining extraordinary goals. History does not care to record those who die for selfish goals of earning estates.

Small and big do perform heroic deeds in the commotion of battles. Inebriated with war cries, they even embrace death. Such deeds might be done to earn fiefdom or to protect it.

But embracing death consciously knowing that it is not going to fetch a penny is a deed of different order altogether.

It is beyond dispute that Shivaji's companions and his ryots selflessly participated in his mission. Not even an iota of doubt can be raised about the fact that his ryots held dear to their heart his work and his rule because they thought their was its own work and their own rule.

But, how can this happen? What exactly had Shivaji done so that his ryots believed his cause as their own? His contemporaries or any such kings of his times could not earn this kind of ryots loyalty. The real question is: How could Raja Shivaji earn it?

The answer to this question lies in the way Shivaji treated his subjects, the way in which he approached the ryots. He greatly differed in this from his contemporary kings.

Landlordism and Village System

The common people of those times did not care much as to who was the king. They were least bothered which king was dethroned and who took over. This was simply because whoever the king might be, it hardly mattered as far as the daily life of the ryots was concerned.

The village was almost self-sufficient. The village had its

own autonomous system. It had a Patil, Kulkarni, 12 kinds of balutas, they worked the system - they drove this cart called village. Changes in rulers, who lost and who won, did not affect the cycle of village life. The officers collected taxes without any restraint. They exploited the ryots. Nobody listened to the ryots' pleas against the injustice by these officers. The ryots eventually learned not to complain because they knew there was nobody out there listening. The rulers changed, but Kulkarnis, Patils, Landlords, Deshmukhs, Jagirdars remained firmly in place. They never changed. Overnight, they would change their loyalties. The slogan 'The king is dead, Long live the king!' was nowhere truer than in their case. They would rush, in an instance, to place their loyalties at the feet of the victorious king. In return they would ensure that their position as officers was kept intact. They continued oppressing the ryots, squeezing them for taxes, and filling the king's coffers. The ryots only knew exploitation. Why on earth would they be bothered which king's coffers were being filled with the wealth looted from them?

The ryots firmly believed that the kings had to be looters. They therefore did not distinguish between one king and another. The great historian V. K. Rajwade writes in his introduction to *Mahikavatichi Bakhar* :

"All the rulers of Hindustan, over the last three thousand years, whether indigenous or foreigners, were selfish thieves and plunderers and the Hindu populace honestly believes in its heart of hearts, all these kings and governments are nothing but parasites and bands of robbers."

Those who were perpetually subjected to theft were least bothered about who was the thief; which caste he belong to? A king came and a king went. It made no difference to the ryots.

Marx, who was studying in a far corner of the world in Britain, concluded in spite of the paucity of resources, the same. Marx wrote a letter to a great friend of his on 14th June 1853. He wrote,

"...although the villages themselves have been sometimes injured, and even desolated, by war, famine and disease, the same name, the same limits, the same interests and even the

same families have continued for ages. The inhabitants give themselves no trouble about the breaking up and division of kingdoms; while the village remains entire, they care not to what power it is transferred, or to what sovereign it devolves; its internal economy remains unchanged."

There was no organic relation between the king and the ryots. King's religion in no way affected the life of the ryots. Even if the rulers changed, they adopted the existing systems and continued exploiting the people. The king did not care a damn even though his feudatories exploited, looted and tortured the ryots. He was least bothered about such acts; as long as the feudatories paid his revenues regularly, all was well in his kingdom!

In such a society Shivaji began his work. He established his reign and there was instant change. A link was established between the king and his ryots. The ryots could see their king with their own eyes; he was close to them; he met them; he enquired after them; he was alert that they were no more subjected to any injustice and torture. He exercised power to help them.

He reined in the various feudatories, Jagirdars, Deshmukhs, Vatandars, Patils, Kulkarnis, in their so far unrestrained acts of omission and commission. He told the ryots that the feudatories were the servants of the state and not its masters. Now they came under the king's control. Rules and regulations were introduced regarding what they should do and what they should not do.

Now the ryots got courage to seek justice in case the feudatories persecuted and tortured them. This became possible as enquiries of arrogant officers and feudatories were conducted and such drastic punishment was meted out to them that they would never resort to their heinous ways of subjecting the ryots to their own aggrandisement.

This was all new to Shivaji's ryots. This was not at all happening anywhere else. They could feel the difference and their way of looking at their king and his work was changing. They made both the king and his mission their own.

❑❑❑

2. The King with Affection for his Ryots

Shahaji, Shivaji's father, was the chieftain of the Pune province. He arranged for Shivaji, even though a teenager, to supervise it under the guidance of Dadoji Kondadeo.

The province lay on the borders between the Mughal Empire and Adilshahi. This region always suffered from the invasions by these rulers against each other; towns and villages were often burnt down and settlements made desolate. The *Sabhasad Bakhar, a* well-known chronicle, contains a graphic description of these ghastly happenings. Jungles took over the deserted villages and hamlets. Foxes, wolves and other beasts roamed freely over them.

It was in this state of agriculture and of peasants that Shivaji and Dadoji took over the administration of the region.

Shivaji awarded these villages to those who took upon themselves to settle them once again. He encouraged those who came forward to till the land by supplying them with seeds and implements. He also kept the rent and taxes on the land newly brought under cultivation on lower rates.

He abolished the practice of collecting taxes as per the whims and fancies of the collectors. He measured land, and fixed the rent of such measured land. He strictly ordered the tax collectors to collect only as much tax as was fixed legally. He strictly saw that his orders were implemented in letter and spirit.

He exempted peasants from paying the rent in the times of droughts. How were the peasants to pay if there was no produce? Shivaji understood the plight of peasants and acted accordingly. He not only exempted them from paying taxes and

rent, he actually gave them extra help and aid.

And These Landlords

"From ancient times there used to be various feudatories. Those included Deshmukh, Deshpande, Desai, Patil, Kulkarni, Khot, Mirasdar and other landlords. They were chiefs of *Mahals* and villages. It was their job and right to collect revenue from the ryots. The government officers themselves did not directly collect the revenue. The main responsibility of doing so lay with such landlords. As a result they lorded over the people in those villages. They extracted taxes as they fancied. If a village owed to government about two hundred or three hundred rupees as taxes, the landlords squeezed two thousand or three thousand. Thus they deceived both the government as well as people to satisfy their own greed. They lived in mansions and fortresses and became arrogant by amassing guns, swords and keeping a large number of soldiers. When the government officers heard of such illegal activities of these feudatories, the former demanded more money. However, many powerful Deshmukhs and landlords did not respect their authority. On occasions, they even picked up quarrels and disputes. All this resulted in the provinces after provinces being infested with unruly thugs and looters."

It was against this background that Shivaji put a tab on the collection of taxes from peasants. Now look at this—

"The Mahalkari measured total land in the state and registered the names of those who tilled it in his records. He used a stick to measure. Its length was about five arms' length and five fists. An arm was considered to be fourteen *tasus* long and the stick's length was eighty-two *tasus*. Twenty sticks made a *bigha* and hundred and twenty *bighas* a *chawar*. The crop estimate was made by just looking at the standing crop. It was agreed that the cultivating farmer kept for himself the third portion of his total produce while he paid two portions to the government. This was to be paid to the government in either kind or cash. In critical times such as droughts the government gave liberal loans to farmers. They were supposed to repay this amount in the installments over a period of four to five years. If any land were to be newly brought under cultivation and it were to be given to a new cultivator who did

not own any cattle to work with, the government supplied everything to him: the cattle, seeds and even grains and money for his sustenance until he harvested the crops. This had to be paid back after about four years. By giving such rights to till the land almost all the arable land was brought under cultivation. The officers were strictly warned to collect tax from the ryots proportionate to their income, that no force should be exerted on them to pay the taxes."

"Shivaji put down all the disorder let loose by the feudatories and landlords. He appointed officers for collection of taxes. He made sure that the erstwhile landlords and feudatories could not harm the ryots in any manner; that their incomes were fixed on the basis of what they used to earn in earlier regimes; and that they should not collect the taxes directly from the ryots. Now they could get their portion of the government revenue without any risk. Only they had to get it sanctioned from the government every year. This put a tight check on their willful and unruly behavior and set the ryots free of their clutches. The ryots became free and happy. Maharaj destroyed the mansions and fortresses of these village officers, Deshmukhs and Deshpandes, who had enslaved the ryots and issued an order that they should not ever more resort to such uncivilized ways and should live in simple and unpretentious houses as the ryots lived in."

Would the ryots, then, not be devoted to the king who cared so much for the peasants and their land? Would they not feel that Shivaji's work should not only continue but also grow? Would the peasant boy of tender age not risk his life to challenge Shivaji's enemies?

The way the ryots deal with a king depends on how the king deals with them. If the king truly cares for the ryots, they in turn care ten times for their king. If the rulers treat the state as, not their own private property but the people's property, the ryots accept that state as their own. And if the rulers treat people as insignificant; they hold the state as though it were inherited from their forefathers, the ryots rise to dethrone such rulers. Such is the history of the world.

Shivaji and Protection of Women

Some of the facts in Shivaji's life are indisputable; and

nobody doubts those. Yet one cannot say for sure that all have realized their significance.

Shivaji's attitude to women is one such case.

Women, especially poor women, were sexually oppressed and exploited in feudal times. Shivaji's time could not be an exception to this. Leave alone kings and the princes, even their chieftains, feudatories, Patils, Deshmukhs and landlords treated the daughters and daughters-in-law of the poor as objects to be enjoyed as and when they desired. They were raped in broad daylight and there was no one to turn to for justice. Those who were supposed to do justice were themselves the culprits. They themselves were bestowing titles of honour & status on such criminals.

In such times, Shivaji's attitude in this respect was radically and fundamentally different.

The story of the Patil of village Ranjha is well chronicled. The officer Patil of the village picked up, in broad daylight, a poor peasant's young daughter and raped her. Instead of living the rest of the life in humiliation, she chose to die. She committed suicide. The whole village cried but mutely.

Shivaji heard this news. The Patil was arrested, brought to Pune and the severe punishment of cutting off his arms and legs was meted out. The sentence was not only pronounced; it was implemented without delay. The whole of the Maval province could not believe its eyes or ears. The ryots fell for Shivaji who did not hesitate to punish a Patil, a feudatory, for raping a poor peasant's daughter. It was no surprise that they got ready to sacrifice their own life for his cause. The cause was their own cause: protecting women from such atrocities.

Of course a king requires feudatories to support his rule. But it requires one to have a very strong commitment to the value of justice to punish the erring lords. Shivaji possessed this in abundance and this is the reason why the ryots participated in *Shivakarya,* Shivaji's cause. In our times too, in villages and in towns, the daughters and daughters-in-law of the poor ryots are being raped. What do those who claim his legacy and shout slogans in his name do? Are the culprits

identified and punished? Leave alone cutting off the limbs, do such cases reach doorstep of the courts? Is it not the fact that the culprit is freed as fast as possible, depending upon his stature and his wealth?

This is the reason why one recalls Shivaji in democracy. Yes, he is worth recalling!

We must remember Shivaji to challenge those who invoke his name and yet cover up sins of their loved ones, relations and officers. For this, we must remember Shivaji.

The story of the Ranjha Patil is not an exception. There are many more.

General Sakuji Gaikwad laid siege to the Belawadi fort in 1678. The chief of the fort was a woman. Her name was Savitribai Desai. This warrior woman defended the fort for twenty-seven days. But finally Sakuji succeeded in conquering the fort and, inebriated with victory, he raped Savitribai. Shivaji heard this and was so angry that he punished Sakuji by blinding his eyes and imprisoning him for the rest of his life. He did not pardon a rapist even though he was his own victorious General. He could do so because he sincerely believed, "a woman's modesty, whoever she may be, must be protected at any cost."

The celebrated story of the Kalyan Subedar's daughter in law has inspired many a poem and song. This beautiful young Muslim woman was presented to him in his court as a gift by one of his victorious warriors. Shivaji looked at her and said, "If only my *mother* was so beautiful?" To utter such words one needs to have rich character and a healthy attitude to beauty. Can we imagine what would happen if such a woman had come in front of today's uncivilized so-called *Shivabhaktas?* The difference lies between the real Shivaji and false Shivabhaktas.

Shivaji warned his generals and soldiers that no women, whether Hindu or Muslim, should be harmed in battles. He saw to it that those orders were enforced.

It was a regular practice in those times to carry concubines, prostitutes and zanana while on military campaigns. Both Hindu and Muslim kings and generals did this. It was customary to

abduct women belonging to enemy state, molest them and finally convert them into concubines. Shivaji issued a strict order that no one would take such concubines or prostitutes or women servants with them when on campaigns. No woman was to be made a concubine.

We have entered the twenty-first century. Maharashtra claims to be a progressive and just state. Even today women are being raped. Those who support the perpetrators of such atrocities claim Shivaji's legacy and shout loud slogans in his name. What if Shivaji himself were to appear today? What kind of treatment would he give to these Shivabhaktas?

Shivaji and Language of Administration

It has been more than fifty years since linguistic states were introduced in India. Maharashtra too has been a Marathi linguistic state for more than forty years now. And still administration in the state is conducted in English. Will the purpose for which the linguistic states were formed ever be served? We drove away the foreign ruler beyond the seas but have not been able to get rid of the burden of English from our back. The native Sahib continues to speak in English. Being able to speak in English has become a status symbol and those who cannot are considered to be vulgar and backward.

The language of administration in Shivaji's time was mainly Persian. No language is inherently good or bad. But people did not understand Persian. Naturally, the administration that is conducted in a language that people do not understand does not appeal to them. Shivaji noted that people did not understand what was taking place in administration. He very thoughtfully set upon the work of compiling a compendium of the language of administration. He changed the administrative language to Marathi. Now the ryots felt closeness to the administration. They now started to feel that Shivaji's state was their own.

Shivaji and Ryots

We saw how Shivaji's attitude to the women belonging to the poor populace, the ryots, was different from his contemporaries. He had a similar attitude regarding the ryots' property.

Any goon, as a right, would loot the property of the ryots. It was accepted as a matter of routine. Battles were also a daily affair. Armies and cavalries roamed freely from one place to another on campaigns.

What would happen to the ryots' property when the soldiers camped in and around villages?

The cavalries would romp unrestrained through the standing crops. The crop the peasant had raised through hard toil over the year, watered by his sweat, and ready for harvesting would be razed to the ground. The ryots' own King's army did this; to whom could they turn for succour? Who was there to lend them a sympathetic ear? The peasant could do nothing but blame his own fate and stay at home helplessly.

The armies were permitted to do whatever they wanted, without fear. It was in such time that Shivaji commanded his armies not to touch a blade of vegetables grown by farmers, and asked his soldiers to buy articles of daily needs by making payments.

Just imagine what must the peasants have felt when they, till now so much used to seeing, years on end, armies trampling crops under the hooves of their horses, now saw Shivaji's army, carefully skirting the standing crops? What must have they felt about the king who took so much care of their crops, about the armies so obediently carrying out his commands? Would they not take his cause to their own heart?

Others did not stop at damaging crops only. They used force as a matter of habit. What happened when the armies and their chiefs camped near a village? The fodder for the horses was collected from the village. Patil or Kulkarni, the village officers, marshalled the entire village for their service. When the armies and their chiefs were habituated to this kind of living, when the ryots were used to accepting whatever was forced upon them as preordained by their destiny, a great man appears and issues such extraordinary commands to his army:

Be careful that even a blade of vegetable is not touched.

The fodder required for the horses is to be purchased by making cash payment.

In no case the army is to cause any harm to the ryots.

He does not stop at issuing these orders. He strictly enforces them. Such empathy extraordinaire for the ryots and for their toils earned for him their unparalleled loyalty. Of course we do not encounter such chieftains and their cavalries today. But there are new chieftains and their, if not cavalries, motorcades. The modern day 'chieftains' do not go on any campaigns but they do go on 'inspection' and camp at places with their subordinates and the motorcade. How do these modern armies help themselves? Does the person who supplies meat and chicken receive its price? Do the new chieftains pay the expenses from their own pockets or salaries? Do they make their purchases by 'making cash payments?' What do they really do?

They all take care to display Shivaji's photograph in their house and office. They hail Shivaji at every alternate breath. What have they learnt from Shivaji? Which is their Shivaji? Which is the real Shivaji?

Shall we tell them of Shivaji's strict command about not touching even the stem of vegetable?

This King is seen taking extraordinary care not to cause any harm to common people in his mission of defending the swaraj.

The ethics of Shivaji's times can be found recorded in the various commands issued by Ramchandrapant Amatya. These various commands not only show a subtlety of mind of Amatya, they also exemplify affection for people.

Wood naturally was important for the navy. There were thick jungles, rich in timbre. And yet look at the following striking command:

'The wood of mango and jackfruit trees can be of great use for the navy. But do not allow any one to touch them. These trees do not grow in a couple of years. The ryots planted them and nursed them like their own offspring. Their grief will know no bounds (if these trees are cut). Even if a tree is found dying, it should be bought from its owner, that too after he is persuaded to part with it and he, totally satisfied, cuts it with his own hands.'

Rajwade has recorded, in his eighth volume, some of the words of Shivaji himself. When his cavalry was camping near Chiplun, Shivaji laid down some do's and don'ts for his officers:

'People must have stored hay for use during the rains and it could be lying about. If anyone, ignoring this, lights a bonfire or smokes a chillum the hay may catch fire and cause great harm to everyone. The whole of cavalry could be destroyed and you shall be held responsible for the death of the horses.'

Or read this:

'You have been given money. Whatever is needed must be bought from the market by paying cash. If you do not do so and harm the people, they will feel that the Mughals were better...'

We do not find among his contemporaries a King or a feudal lord who had such sympathy for his people. Shivaji's affection and sympathy for his people was of a different order and therefore their loyalty to him was in turn of a very high order.

When the armies treated their own people as if they were their slaves and concubines, when those armies looted and devastated the ryot's property and wealth, raped their daughters and daughters-in-law, Shivaji's army behaved in an impeccable manner. The army was transformed under Shivaji. How? What was the reason?

This is a very important question.

The answer to this question cannot be found in Shivaji's mere character. It will also be inadequate to say that his commands were instrumental in this change. For a proper answer to this question we need to understand the very structure and the purpose of the existence of his army.

Peasant Army

Other kings of the time kept standing armies. Fighting was their occupation. They earned their living by fighting wars. They used to be busy, throughout the year, in wars. The soldiers, who are away from their homes and the land they could have tilled, are bound to develop a reckless attitude. They do not

care for anything. Such soldiers tend to be irresponsible. Such salaried soldiers do not care for the people. Their attitude is not congenial to be caring for the *ryots'* women and its wealth.

Shivaji's army was not the army of such professional soldiers. Not that there was no standing army. But most of the soldiers were practising farmers; they actually cultivated land. They lived with their families. At the same time they were soldiers. It was their custom to cross the village borders, as *seemollanghan* on the day of *Vijayadashami,* participate in military campaigns and return on the day of *Akshayya Tritiya* to their families and work on their land.

Such soldiers, who have a living and close relation to the family and the land, develop an attitude that cares for the land and wealth of other farmers. They respect the latter's women and daughters. When they see crops in someone else's farm they are reminded of their own crops and fields. When they see strange women they remember their own mothers, wives and daughters. Then they do not use force; they do not rape; they do not burn houses and crops. A person having living relations with land as a peasant does not turn into a looter.

The section of society, the class from which a soldier comes - it is very important.

There is another very important point.

The armies of other kings were the armies of the looters. Looting was their very purpose. Why did the other kings want kingdoms? If not for loot, then for what else? Would they not loot? Those who were used to wallow in luxury did so by looting the ryots with the help of the armies. Why would they care for morals? Would they protect the ryots' wealth? Looting was not the motive for which Shivaji founded his kingdom. Nor was it the purpose of his army. On the contrary, it was to stop this kind of loot, which had been going on for ages. The army that was founded to stop such loot, to end oppression could not have itself resorted to such dastardly acts. Those who stand up to thwart oppression do not become oppressors.

It does not mean that Shivaji's army did not loot anytime and anywhere. He looted in the enemy lands. The loot of Surat

is well known. But what was looted was wealth and it was done so as a necessity. It did not involve other oppression like raping women.

There is one more point. Other kings did not pay salaries to their soldiers. Instead, a part of the loot was given to them. Naturally, the soldiers tended to loot as much as possible. Shivaji abolished this practice of giving part of the loot. It was replaced by a new practice of depositing the looted things into the treasury and paying the wage for their work. Obviously, there was no vested interest for the soldiers to loot more. The soldiers used to get their wage irrespective of the fact whether they got the loot or not, whether the loot was small or big.

This resulted in soldiers giving up the habit of looting for private purpose.

Shivaji's personal morality was impeccable. All his commands were very clear and purposeful. He severely punished those who transgressed these commands. He raised his army from the productive peasants. His soldiers had living relation with farming and physical labour. He paid them in cash. Finally, he had devoted his life to the cause of ending injustice and plunder. All this resulted in moulding the character of his army. For the ryots Shivaji's army was not a gang of looters; on the contrary, they were saviours who had set upon to protect them. The army protected the ryots and the ryots in turn supported it.

The relations between the army and the ryots need to be based on unity for running the state for their welfare. The people should not fear their own army. One succeeds in one's cause only if the army and the ryots are supportive of each other. There are modern examples where the people and the army share such relationship. The experience of Vietnam is fresh in our mind.

Protection to Trade and Industry

All modern states adopt the policy of charging severe taxes on the goods imported from foreign states. This is a policy of protecting indigenous trade and industry. But it is surprising to see that Shivaji, during the middle ages and in a feudal society, charged such a tax to encourage indigenous trade.

Shivaji wrote a letter on 6th December 1671, to Sarsubedar of Kudal, Narhari Anandrao. He asked the latter to be vigilant while charging the octroi on the salt at Sangameshwar. He exhorted the officer to charge the octroi heavily. Otherwise the outsiders would monopolize the whole trade and the indigenous trade would become unviable, he cautioned.

This is one of the aspects of his farsightedness. He took care of the trade in the swaraj along with agriculture.

In his times Dutch traders did trade in Maharashtra. They asked for permission to do so. He gave the permission. But he put some conditions. One of the conditions was octroi. The order issued on 24th August 1677, permitting a Dutch company to do trade in his state, says,

'The Dutch Company is being permitted to carry out its trade in the Jinji Province. The Dutch shall have to pay an octroi of 2.5 per cent on their goods at Kuddalore.

'If advance information on the imports and exports is supplied the officers will not open the parcels for inspection. The Hawaldar officers are prohibited from allowing the goods to enter unless the proper tax is paid.'

Prohibition on Slave trade

The same order contains another very important clause, which has remained unnoticed so far. It says,

'You were permitted without hindrance, in the Musalman rule, to purchase or sell men and women as slaves. But under my rule you are not allowed the trade of men and women as slave. If you try to do so my people will stop you. This clause is to be strictly followed.'

When the slaves were traded at places in India, when Indian men and women were captured and forcibly taken as slaves to work as laborers in foreign countries, Shivaji prohibited the slave trade because he was the king of the ryots.

It was Shivaji's state policy to look after his ryot well in all possible ways.

❑❑❑

3. Religious - but not a Bigot

Shivaji and Religion

What was Shivaji's approach to religion in general? What was his actual practice in this respect? How did he treat both Hindu and Muslim religions? These are historically very important questions. These are relevant in today's times also.

Shivaji was a Hindu. He was born in Maharashtra and it remained his place of operations throughout. Hindus therefore are proud of him. It is quite natural. Maharashtrian Hindus in particular are more proud of him. It is also very natural - nothing wrong in it. It is but human to look at one's own greatness, the greatness of one's own religion, and the greatness of one's own country or region in the light of the great heroes belonging to one's own religion. Moreover, the lesser the number of such people in a community or a religion the more they take pride in them.

However, we tend to create, unconsciously, a larger than life image of such 'heroes.' Many times the image is deliberately projected as one dimensional as it suits one's present day purposes and conveniences. In the process, a distortion creeps in and the image itself becomes distorted. It loses its identity.

There are several reasons why Shivaji's work, his administration, his time, the reforms he brought into social life and his attitude to religion are not projected adhering to the historical truth. His image in popular imagination is many times contrary to the truth.

Even an illiterate Maharashtrian knows Shivaji. They know the stories of his life. They know many things - places, names, incidences related to him. How did all this information reach out to those illiterates far flung into the four corners of Maharashtra?

Innumerable ballads on Shivaji, his times, on miraculous, dramatic and sublime incidences in his life have been sung. Can one name a Marathi *shahir, a* bard, whether in Shivaji's time or even today, who has not sung of Shivaji? The answer is an emphatic 'No.' Every *shahir* has done it, and it was very right to do so. The same is true of folk songs and all folklore. *Kirtanas* are no exception. Take anything - speeches, discourses, theatre and cinema. These are the means by which history is taken to people.

Distortions, interpolations in the historical accounts in the process of imaginative reconstruction are not unlikely. Even if we overlook such distortions, we have to admit that the media mentioned above have their own natural limitations.

How can the miracles be done away with if the audience gathers to be entertained? The ballad would be quite uninteresting without some 'imaginative' stories. Various figures of speech become indispensable, especially the hyperbole. If these 'performances' were to only enumerate the figures of historical dates, and not use the figures of speech, if they were to logically analyze, and not to resort to the hyperbole, would there be a second 'performance'? Moreover, the authors-performers have to take into account the level of understanding of their audiences. They themselves have their own limitations. All this has contributed to creating the image of Shivaji in the way we have received it. Of course there are many other factors involved in the distortion: self-interests, contemporary political expediencies, a wrong approach to history or, at the least, inadequate understanding and so on.

Shivaji and Musalmans

Shivaji was anti-Muslim.
His Life Mission was to oppose the Muslim Religion.
He was a protector of the Hindu Religion.
He was a Hindu Emperor (Hindu Padpatshah).
He was a protector of cows and Brahmins
(Go-Brahmin Pratipalaka).

This is Shivaji's image quite widespread among the masses.

A couplet by his contemporary poet, Bhushan, reflects this image. He wrote, *'Shivaji Na Hota, To Sunta Hoti Sabki.'* There

have been such similar instances of misinterpretation held in a large number. 'Shivaji's war was a kind of crusade. Religion was the inspiration of his mission, Shivaji fought for religion. He succeeded because he fought for religion. In fact, he was a reincarnation of God himself! He was the reincarnation of Vishnu or Shiva. God took on this reincarnation to save the religion. Goddess Bhavani gifted the sword to save the religion." So on and so forth.

All these theories need to be tested against the historical facts. it will not be proper to uncritically accept them because we are Hindus or because they are convenient to us in the present circumstances. At the same time we should also beware of its flipside. There is a growing tendency among the Muslims: 'We belong to Muslim religion. It is our need to teach Muslims to hate Hindus. As many Hindus worship Shivaji; we should hold him as the savior of Hindu religion and as an aggressor of Muslim religion.' Such uncritical approach too is erroneous. What is the truth?

Shivaji, Pratap, Prithviraj etc.

Let us take the claim: Shivaji succeeded because he was a savior of Hindu religion. If this were the fact why did Rana Pratap or Prithviraj Chauhan not succeed? In actual fact, both of them were high *caste Kshatriya Hindus.* At least some people had doubts about Shivaji's being a Kshatriya. Both Rana Pratap and Prithviraj were no less than Shivaji in respect of bravery, sacrifice, determination and hard work. Possibly they could be a grade better than him in these aspects. Then why did the history take place the way it did? If it was a crusade, why did one succeed and the other two were badly beaten? If it was Shree's *(God's)* Will that the Hindu Rashtra be founded then why was it founded in Maharashtra alone? Why did Shree not Will that it be founded in Rana Pratap's and Prithviraj Chauhan's country as well?

It is not true that Shivaji succeeded because he believed in Hindu religion. It strongly appears that he had set out to do something better than merely saving the religion.

Let us assume for a moment that his contemporary kings belonged to a religion other than Islam. Suppose, there were

kings belonging to Hindu religion. Would Shivaji, then, hate muslims? Why did Shivaji fight against the Muslim kings? Was it because they were Muslims or because they were *kings?* If he fought for both the reasons, then which of the two was the main reason? What was important: they being kings or they being Muslims?

Religious Tolerance of Some Muslim Kings

It is not historically true that all the Muslim Kings were intolerant to Hindus or their religion. History provides with several instances of the Muslim Kings' tolerance. In Maharashtra, especially, which was Shivaji's province, we find many Muslim rulers having political and familial relations with Hindus.

Read the following paragraph from the book *Marathe Sardar* written by Parasnis.

'Marathas were very powerful in Nizam Shahi, Qutb Shahi and Adil Shahi. Gangavi, the founder of Nizam Shahi, who was converted to Islam, was the son of Bahirambhat Kulkarni, a Brahmin. The father of Ahmednagar King too was a Hindu. Yusuf Adil Shah of Vijapur had married a Maratha girl. Qasim Barid was the founder of the throne of Bidar kingdom. His son also had married Sabaji's daughter. Owing to such relations and customs there was tolerance to Hindus and the Marathas were quite powerful in these kingdoms. Parasnis quotes Justice Ranade in the same book,

'Hindus under the Southern Muslim Kingdoms', writes Justice Ranade, "Were encouraged by the kings (in many ways) and they were given many concessions and powers. This was because of a number of factors: alienation of the South Indian Muslims from the radical Muslims of the North, dominant position and a general goodwill of the Hindus in the Bahamani states, the entry of Brahmins and Prabhus in the departments of Treasury and Tax Collection, entry of Marathi language in the administration because of them, the balance of forces resulting in Marathi warriors and officers getting promotions, the King's court donning a deep imprint as a consequence of his marriage with Hindu girls, and deep affection of those converted to Islam for the people of their own caste."

What does the name Hasan Gangu Bahamani, the founder of the Bahamani kingdom, tell us? A Muslim person called Hasan Jaffer had been working for a Brahmin called Gangu. Later on he became a courtier of Tughlaq, the Emperor of Delhi. He became the Emperor's subedar in Maharashtra. He rebelled against the Emperor and founded his own throne in Maharashtra. As a sign of gratitude to and in memory of his former master he adopted a new name, half Hindu and half Muslim: Hasan Gangu. His own state was called Bahamani i.e. related to Brahmins. If the relations between the Hindus and the Muslims had always been of extreme enmity, this would not have happened.

As far as the Hindus and Hindu lords were loyal to the Muslim Kings the latter were tolerant to them. If the state itself were endangered they would become intolerant.

What was important was neither being Hindu nor being Muslim. Of great importance was the state.

It is also not true that all the emperors of Delhi were fundamentalist Muslims. Akbar's tolerance is well known. He even tried to found a new syncretic religion called Din-E-Ilahi. In his times there was considerable cultural unity. Hindu Toradmal, as revenue Minister, was using his intelligence for the cause of a King who happened to be a Muslim. The high cast-Brahmin, Jagannath Pandit, was happily constructing Sanskrit poetry in the court of Shah Jehan.

A story of Pandit Jagannath is quite well known. The Hindu king of Jaipur made great efforts to get this Hindu Pandit under his tutelage so as to add to the king's status. Panditraj Jagannath's reply to his invitation is very revealing :

'Only the Lord of Delhi or the Lord of the World has the might to fulfill my wishes. If any other king desires to do something for me it will be just enough for my hand to mouth existence.'

The caste of the Lord of Delhi was not important. What and how much he gave was important. Shah Jehan's son Darah was a Sanskrit scholar. He used to regularly meet with the scholars from Kashi. In those times even "Allopanishad" was composed on the lines of the well-known Upanishads like

Chhandogya, Brihadaaranyak and Ken etc.

A scholar of Shejwalkar's stature has gone to the extent of arguing that if Darah, Aurang Zeb's elder brother, had ascended the throne in his place, this continent would have come under one rule and would have become a very powerful country. In short, it can easily be seen that all the Muslim rulers were not the haters of the Hindus.

Shivaji's Muslim Lieutenants

Shivaji had many Muslims working under him. They held very important positions in his army and administration. Many of them were appointed at very high and responsible posts.

The chief of Shivaji's artillery was a Muslim. His name was Ibrahim Khan. Artillery formed a very crucial part of the armed forces; perhaps the most important. Gun was the most advanced weapon of the time. It was of great importance for the battles for forts. A Musalman was the chief of such a division.

The construction of the navy is quoted as the example of Chhatrapati Shivaji's foresight. It is justified also. The large tract of Konkan has a very long coastline. A well-equipped navy was essential for its defence. Shivaji installed such a naval force. The chief of such another crucial armed division was again a Musalman. His name was Daulat Khan, Darya Sarang Daulat Khan.

Shivaji's personal bodyguard included a Musalman youth called Madari Mhetar. He was a trusted servant. Why should he, a Musalman, have helped Shivaji in his most dramatic and legendary escape from Agra? Would it have been possible if Shivaji had been a hater of Muslims?

Shivaji had many such Muslims as his servants. One of them was Kazi Hyder. After the battle of Saleri, Aurang Zeb's lieutenants in the South sent a Hindu Brahmin ambassador so as to establish amicable relations with Shivaji. Shivaji in turn sent Kazi Hyder as his emissary. Thus a Muslim ruler had under him a Hindu ambassador and a Hindu ruler had a Muslim. If the society were vertically split between the Hindu and Muslim communities this could not have happened.

Siddi Hilal was one such Musalman working for Shivaji. Shivaji defeated Rustum Zama and Fazal Khan near Raibaug in 1660. Siddi Hilal fought on Shivaji's side. Also, in the same year, Siddi Johar laid siege to the Panhala Fort. Shivaji's trusted aide, Netaji Palkar, kept on raiding the siege. Siddi Hilal and his son were at Netaji's side at the time. Hilal's son Vahwah was wounded and captured in this battle.

Musalman Siddi Hilal, along with his son, fought for Shivaji, a Hindu, against a Musalman. Would this happen if the nature of wars at that time was communal, as a war between Hindus and Musalmans? *Sabhasad Bakhar* mentions on page seventy-six one more Musalman who was Shivaji's lieutenant. His name was Shama Khan. Rajwade mentions one Noor Khan Beg as Shivaji's *Sarnobat or chief of the infantry. (Marathyanchya Itihasachi Sadhane,* vol. 17, p. 17).

These were not isolated individuals. They worked for Shivaji along with the Muslim soldiers under them.

But there is a more important and authentic evidence of Shivaji's tolerance of Muslims.

'...around 1648 about five hundred to seven hundred Pathans belonging to Vijapur army came to join Shivaji. Shivaji accepted the advice given to him at that time by Gomaji Naik Pansambal. Shivaji later continued the policy based on that advice. Gomaji had said,

"These people have come hearing about your reputation. It will not be proper to turn them away. If you think that you should organize Hindus alone and will not be bothered about others, you will not succeed in establishing your rule. The one who wishes to establish rule must gather all the eighteen castes and the four *varnas* and assign their functions."

Shivaji was yet to establish his rule in 1648. The piece of advice quoted above adequately explains Shivaji's future state policy.

Grand Duff, too, mentioning Gomaji Naik's advice in his biography of Shivaji, says,

"After this, Shivaji enlisted a large number of Musalmans also in his army and this helped a great deal in founding his

rule..."

It is, thus, very clear that Shivaji's lieutenants and soldiers were not Hindus only. They were Musalmans as well. If Shivaji had undertaken the task of eliminating Muslim religion, these Musalmans would certainly not have joined him. Shivaji had set out to demolish the *despotic and exploitative rule* of Muslim rulers. He had set out to bring in a rule that cared for the ryots. This is the reason why the Muslims too joined him in his cause.

The question of religion was not the main question. The main question was of the *state*.

Not loyalty to religion, but loyalty to the *state, to a master* was more important.

Hindu Sardars under Muslim Rulers

Just as there were Muslim Sardars and soldiers working with Shivaji, there were Hindu Sardars and soldiers serving Musalman kings and emperors and they were numerous.

In fact Shivaji's own father, Shahaji, was an in fluential big Sardar working for Adil Shah, Vijapur's Muslim ruler. Shahaji's father in law, Lakhuji Jadhav, was Nizam's Mansabdar in Maharashtra. More of Javali, Nimbalkar of Phaltan, Khem Sawant of Sawantwadi and Suryarao Shringarpure of Shringarpur were all Mansabdars of Adil Shahi.

Mirza Raja Jai Singh, against whose military might and war strategies Shivaji had to accept defeat and after signing a humiliating agreement had to go to Agra only to be arrested with son Sambhaji, was a high caste Rajput Hindu. All he was doing was to serve honorably under a Mughal emperor. When Mirza Raja Jai Singh invaded Shivaji he had several Hindu Sardars under him. They were Jats, Marathas, Rajputs including Raja Rai Singh Sisodiya, Sujan Singh Bundela, Hari Bhan Gaur, Uday Bhan Gaur, Sher Singh Rathod, Chaturbhuj Chauhan, Mitra Sen, Indra Man Bundela, Baji Chandrarao, Govind Rao etc.

Tanaji Malusare, a lieutenant of Shivaji, died in action while capturing the Fort Kondana. This fort was renamed as Simhagad

to commemorate Tanaji's heroic sacrifice. The officer in charge of the Fort Kondana was a Hindu Rajput, Uday Bhanu, and he was a lieutenant of a Muslim Emperor.

There were about 500 Sardars holding different mansabs under Akbar. Out of those 22.5 per cent were Hindus. This ratio in Shah Jehan' s rule was 22.4 per cent. Aurang Zeb is supposed to be the most fanatic of all the Muslim rulers. The Hindu mansabdars were 21.6 per cent, at the beginning of his reign, and the number rose later to 31.6.

It was Aurang Zeb who had appointed Raja Jaswant Singh, a Hindu Rajput, as the Subedar (governor) of the Deccan. Arang Zeb's first Minister too was a Hindu, Raghunath Das. He was a Rajput and yet fought against Rajputs on behalf of Aurang Zeb. One of Rana Pratap Singh's General was Hakim Khan *Soor, a* Muslim. The Chief of the Peshwa's artillery in the battle of Panipat was Ibrahim Khan Gardi.

The Hindus who served Muslim Kings with loyalty and occasionally fought against them were not castigated as sinners or religious renegades. They were not called anti-Hindu or pro-Muslim. Loyalty to the Master, rather than to religion, was more important in those times.

In ancient or medieval India wars were not waged on the ground of religion. The main motive behind wars was to capture or to strengthen power. It was true that religion was temporarily used to support the main purpose. But it never was the sole or main motive.

Many such instances can be cited.

Musalmans versus Musalmans
Hindus versus Hindus
Hindu-Musalmans versus Hindu-Musalmans

It is thus true that there were several Musalmans working under Shivaji and many more working under Musalman rulers. Similarly it is revealing to see who fought against whom. It becomes very clear that the wars did not take place between Hindus versus Musalmans as such.

Muslim rulers fought amongst themselves.

Musalman Babar became the Emperor of Delhi by defeating the Musalman Emperor sitting on throne, Ibrahim Khan Lodi. This same Babar founded the Mughal dynasty. Both Sher Shah and Humayun were Muslims yet they fought a bitter war against each other. The rulers of Vijapur and Golconda were both Muslims. Aurang Zeb fought a protracted war against these so-called Muslim rules. This shows that what was important was not religion but power. If at all religion had any importance it was secondary. The primary concern was political power.

The legendary battle of Haldi was fought between Rana Pratap and Akbar. This battle had a great importance for Rana Pratap himself in particular, and Rajputs and Rajasthan in general. But can this battle of the Haldi pass, by any stretch of imagination, be described as the battle between Hindus and Musalmans?

Musalman Akbar's army was led by the Rajput Man Singh. That army consisted of 60,000 Mughal troops and 40,000 Rajput troops. Whereas Rana Pratap's army had 40,000 Rajput soldiers, it consisted of a large division of Pathans under Hakim Khan Soor. It also had a cavalry under a Pathan called Taj Khan. The chief of Rana Pratap's artillery too was a Musalman Sardar. Guru Govind Singh too fought against the central Muslim power. His army also had, along with Sikhs, thousands of Muslims. After Aurang Zeb died, there was a fierce struggle for succession among his heirs. Guru Govind helped Bahadur Shah in that feud.

The religious basis behind the uprising by the Jats, Rajputs, Marathas and Sikhs was too flimsy. Those up-risings were basically against the despotic central rule. The Soldiers and noblemen were loyal to their masters irrespective of religion. Neither Hindu nationalism nor the mission of spreading Islam did inspire the standing armies of the feudal period. To serve a master as long as he fed, was the general social practice.

Loot and Destruction of Temples

"The Muslim kings were cruel and barbaric. They destroyed and desecrated temples. They attacked Hindu religion. Therefore, all the Musalmans are necessarily anti-Hindu. And, since they are anti-Hindu, the Hindus also must have to be anti-Muslim."

This always has been the refrain of the fundamentalist Hindu organizations.

Just as Hindu organizations use this kind of argument, the Muslim organizations too use similar argument.

They tell their followers, "Hindu religion is the religion of Kafirs. What our forefathers did to destroy it was quite correct. If possible, we should also do the same. We should be at least against the Hindus." We are traditional rulers - we are no more ruling; they regret. This argument is used by them to organize themselves on religious basis.

It is true that the invading Muslim armies, while expanding their rule, looted and destroyed temples. But this is not the whole truth. It is a half-truth. The tribes-like armies of Arabs, Turks, Afghans etc. were not regularly paid. It was an accepted practice for them to loot and keep their share with them as wage. Hindu temples used to be very rich. While looting, the invaders destroyed those temples and divided the booty.

These armies would not care to touch the temples situated atop mountain peaks or deep inside the ravines. What could be reason for this? The main purpose was to loot the wealth in temples and not to destroy them.

Looting wealth was the prime concern; religion was secondary. Destruction of temples was a means of achieving this purpose. A major portion of this loot went to the king. It was the chief source of king's revenue.

Another motive of attacking temples was to discourage the people to live in surrounding areas; to create fear among them by breaking their fighting spirit. People believed in religion and in god. It was easy for the invaders to make them believe that those who had looted god would easily loot them too. "Such a powerful god could not do anything; what we mortals can do?" This kind of helplessness and panic would spread all over. This would make it easy for the invaders to conquer the enemy land. In those times, temples were not centers of religion alone. They were centers of wealth, of power and status. There was another benefit of looting temples. The invaders claimed that they were breaking the temples of kafirs, that they were destroying their religion. This worked as a camouflage to hide

the real thing, the loot of wealth. This would help in garnering support of the priestly elites, mullas and maulavis, as a device to get the support of the Muslim masses. Religion was used as ruse to cover fowl deeds.

Loot followed by Endowments

The rulers who initially looted and demolisited temples on their way to assuming power, would, once the enemy kingdom was conquered, their own rule was stabilized, award endowments and grants to those very temples. There are numerous such examples.

Aurang Zeb, who is known as a religious fanatic, destroyed many temples while invading kingdoms to expand his own empire. But the same Aurang Zeb donated money to temples. He awarded 200 villages to the Jagannath temple of Ahmedabad. He donated money to Hindu temples at Mathura and Banaras also.

There are differences of opinion among scholars on whether Afzal Khan broke the idols in Pandharpur and Tuljapur temples. Some believe he did. Shejwalkar, however, thinks otherwise. He thinks that the idols in place today are quite ancient. Whatever the case in this regard may be, it is recorded that Afzal Khan while camping at Wai before launching his assault on Shivaji at Pratapgadh, not only continued the traditional rights of Brahmin priests but also awarded new ones. Moreover, can we forget, when Afzal Khan supposedly destroyed the Bhavani temple at Tuljapur, he was accompanied by Pilaji Mohite, Shankarraoji Mohite, Kalyanrao Yadav, Naikji Sarate, Nagoji Pandhare, Prataprao More, Zunjarrao Ghatge, Kate, Baji Ghorpade and Sambhajirao Bhonsle. It is well known that Goddess Sharada temple at Shringeri was damaged while the Marathas looted it and the Musalman King Tipu Sultan restored it later.

Why was money donated to temples after a rule was stabilized? If the Hindus could be appeased by giving such donations and would not be interested in creating any nuisance to the rule, the Muslim rulers did not mind doing it. Actually they were happy with this kind of arrangement.

Political power was the cause for looting and demolishing temples; again, it was motivation of political power behind for

donating to them money or property and repairing them.

Power : Dominant; Religion : Subordinate

Also, it is not true that Muslim kings alone looted temples. Hindu kings too looted temples for wealth.

Harsha Dev, King of Kashmir, used to loot Hindu temples also. He would melt idols for metals in them. He would even desecrate them by sprinkling them with human waste and urine before melting. All such details are graphically narrated in Kalhana's *Rajatarangini.* However we do not find a record of communal riots having taken place because of this desecration by King Harsha Dev.

He had even opened a section called the 'Demolition of Gods' (Devotpatan) in his revenue department!

If the Muslims started being a hindrance and a nuisance to the Muslim rule, the rulers would not hesitate to harass them in spite of the Mullas and Maulavis.

The bakhar writers have accused Mohammad Tughlaq of massacring Mullas and Sayyeds. Some historians have noted how the Mullas were scared of Jehangir and how they would hide if he came.

What is the conclusion of all this? More important for the rulers of those times was to rule, not religion.

Shivaji's Wars against Marathas and Hindus

Chhatrapati Shivaji had to fight several wars, big and small, to found his Kingdom. The existing rulers belonged to Muslim religion. He had to naturally wage wars against them. At the same time he had to fight the Marathas as well. There are meticulously kept historical records about this. It will not be proper to ignore them.

Riyasatkar Sardesai writes, in his *Marathi Riyasat,*

"The war against Vijapurkars did not mean the war between Hindus and Musalmans. It could not have acquired such character..."

In fact Shivaji faced a huge problem in powerful Maratha

noblemen serving under the Vijapurkars. They did not respect Shivaji at all. Right from the beginning, the noblemen like Mohite, Ghorpade, More, Sawant, Dalavi, Surve, Nimbalkar etc. were more or less against Shivaji and his cause.

Why were these and other such Hindu-Maratha noblemen against Shivaji? They were all Hindus. They observed their religion with great faith. If Shivaji had undertaken the cause of protecting Hindu religion, why should all these have opposed him?

Like Riyasatkar Sardesai other scholars such as Sabhasad, Capon and Parasnis too have supplied lists of the great and powerful Maratha noblemen who opposed Shivaji. If Shivaji had taken upon a *Dharmakarya,* why should these Hindus have fought against him? Sardesai writes, "They feared to lose what they possessed." What did they possess? Chronicler Capon writes that Shivaji was a destroyer. What did he destroy? The Chronicler tells us,

"In the regions that he won from the Vijapurkars, Shivaji replaced the old system of monopoly in tax collection with the collection of revenue based on evaluation of yields of crops every year."

This statement makes very clear what Shivaji really did destroy. This chronicler was angry that Shivaji had destroyed the system of monopoly. But he could not help admitting a truth, "It was possibly beneficial to the people".

It is very obvious whom Shivaji harmed and whom he helped.

Because of such vested interests the chief Maratha Hindu noblemen, Ghatge, Khandagale, Baji Ghorpade, Baji Mohite, Nimbalkar, Dabir, More, Bandal Sawant, Surve, Khopade, Pandhare, Desais of Konkan and Deshmukhs of Maval etc. were opposed to Shivaji. His very close relations, Vyankoji Bhonsle and Mambaji Bhonsle were against him. Jagdevrao Jadhav and Rathoji Mane, related from his mother's side, were also opposed to him. It was but natural that Shaista-E-Khan, when he invaded Shivaji, should be accompanied by the Hindu noblemen from the North. Many Maratha noblemen from Maharashtra too had joined hands with him. They included

Sakhaji Gaikwad, Dinkarrao Kakade, Rambhajirao Pawar, Sarjerao Ghatge, Kamlojirao Kakade, Jaswantrao Kakade, Tryambkrao Khandagale, Kanakojirao Gade, Antajirao and Dattajirao Khandagale. More surprising and painful is the fact that Shivaji's own blood relations, Tryambakraoji, Jivajirao, Balajiraje and Parasojiraje Bhonsle were with the Mughal warlord, Shaista-E-Khan. This Mughal army included Dattajiraje and Rustumrao Jadhav of Sindkhed. These Jadhavs were from Jijabai's family. Krishnaji Kalbhor of Loni had joined Khan with the hope of obtaining the fiefdom of Pune. Khan confiscated the Deshmukhi from Shitole and awarded it to Kalbhor. Balajirao Honap lived near Lal Mahal in Pune. He had spent some time of his life under the protection of the umbrella of the swaraj. But he felt more affinity to Shaist-E-Khan than to Shivaji. Such were the people we could call our 'own', such were the 'Hindus.' Such was their patriotism and such was their love for their religion!

Their loyalty was towards the fief. It is clearer than sunlight. The only admirable exception was Kanhoji Jedhe.

Shivaji Maharaj held a very clear, and very bitter, view of these lords and noblemen. His Prime Minister has said at one place, "They have a natural predisposition, a natural hunger to become powerful, to rob others.... They become friendly with the enemy on the eve of the latter's invasion with the hope of obtaining a fief...they meet the enemy on their own, without invitation. They pass on the secret information and abet the enemy's entry in our state.... They kill the nation."

For these landlords and noblemen, their fiefs were important. It was not religion. They had a burning passion for the fief, not for religion.

Shivaji and Religion

This does not mean that Shivaji was a non-believer or that he was an atheist. If was also not that he had declared his state to be secular.

Shivaji was a Hindu. He had faith in religion. He practised it in his life. He worshipped gods, goddesses and saints. He donated wealth to temples and in the name of religion.

But was he against Muslim religion? Was he anti-Islam? If he had faith in his religion, did it mean that he hated Islam? Was it his intention or effort to Hinduise the Muslims? Was he trying to Maharashtrise them?

If we wish to be faithful to history, the answers to these questions are in plain negative.

Shivaji had looted Surat on two occasions. The detailed accounts of both are well recorded. There are also records of the looting of the market at Junnar and other places. However, is there the tiniest of proof that he demolished a single mosque? At least, is there any evidence of him having constructed a temple in place of a mosque, which was supposed to have been built by demolishing a temple? Not at all. On the contrary, there are records that he donated money and lands to mosques.

Here is a passage from the Sabhasad's Bakhar; "There were places of worship all over. Proper arrangement of their worship and care was made. He also looked after the arrangements in Peers and mosques."

What was true of the mosques was also true of the Muslim sadhus and saints. Shivaji and his contemporary Marathas and Hindus worshipped and donated money to dargahs. They respected Muslim sadhus, Peers and Fakirs. Shivaji had many gurus. Those included a Muslim saint called Yakut Baba.

Shivaji's tolerance for Muslim religion is recorded in many ways in historical documents. A passage, taken from the Muslim historian Khafi Khan, is very eloquent in this respect:

"Shivaji had made a strict rule that wherever his soldiers went they were not to harm mosques, the Quran or women. If he found a volume of Quran, he would show respect to it and hand it over to his Muslim servant. If any helpless Hindu or Muslim were found, Shivaji would personally look after them until their relatives came to take them."

Raghunath Panditrao quotes one such command by Shivaji in his letter dated 2nd Nov. 1669. It is very clear in this respect.

"Shrimant Maharaj (has ordained) that everybody is free

to follow his religion, nobody is allowed to disturb it." **Those who are using Shivaji in order to obtain people's consent will have to answer for this historical truth. If there are any buyers for their hatred for Islam they should sell it on their own merit. They should not sell their commodity in Shivaji's name. They should not sell that commodity under the brand of Shivaji.**

At the same time, the Muslims should not equate Shivaji with his image created by these so-called Shivabhaktas. They should look at history; they should appreciate his attitude to Islam religion. Then only they should make their opinion.

Shivaji was Hindu and he believed in his religion. But, as King, he never discriminated his people on the basis of religion. He did not treat Hindus in one way and Muslims in another. He did not discriminate against Muslims because they belonged to another religion. All must understand this, both Hindus and Muslims.

There were two kinds of Islamic kings. Some, like Akbar, were tolerant to Hindus. Some were intolerant ones, like Aurang Zeb who charged Hindus with unjustified zizia Tax.

Aurang Zeb levied the zizia tax at the behest of the Muliahs and Maulavis. There was an uprising against this tax. Shivaji wrote a letter to Aurang Zeb about this in Parsian. The letter gives a graphic idea of how Shivaji looked at religion, his own religion as well as an alien religion. Shivaji writes that levying the zizia tax on poor and helpless populace is against the basic tenets of the Mughal rule. Aurang Zeb's great grandfather Akbar had ruled for 52 long years. He treated everyone with justice. The people therefore honored him as Jagatguru. Jahangir and Shah Jehan continued his policy further. All of them became famous all over the world for this. These emperors could easily have collected the zizia tax. But they did not resort to it. That is why they could become so rich and so honored. Their empires grew. But in Aurang Zeb's rule both Hindu and Musalman soldiers were unhappy. The prices of grains had gone up. It was therefore not manly to collect the zizia tax from poor Brahminns, Jogis, Bairagis, Jain Sadhus and Sanyasis.

Such an act would ultimately only discredit the Mughal dynasty.

Shivaji further writes, "The Book of Quran is the word of God himself. It is a heavenly Book. It calls the God as the 'God of the entire World.' It does not call him the God of Musalmans alone. This is because both Hindus and Musalmans are one before him. When the Musalmans pray in the mosques, they in fact pray *Bhagwan*. And Hindus too do the same when they toll the bell in a temple. To oppress a religion is therefore to pronounce enmity with God."

Shivaji therefore appeals to Aurang Zeb that he should not ignore Reason. The Sultan of Gujrat had earlier sacrificed Reason. But he had to pay for it. The Emperor might have to pay in similar fashion. "Any inflammable matter burns out if it comes in contact with fire. Similarly, any rule perishes in people's discontent. The fire of rebellion, born of the torture of innocents, can burn the whole kingdom faster than any fire. The Emperor therefore should not discriminate against any religious creed and oppress them. People, like insects, are harmless. However, if Hindu people are subjected to misery, your empire will be reduced to ashes in the fire of their anger."

Shivaji has propounded an important principle for us Indians here. Akbar and other Emperors did not subject (Indian) people to religious cruelty and oppression. Because of such religious tolerance Akbar was hailed as Jagatguru. But Aurang Zeb, by taxing poor people is acting against the principles of Islam. Quran is the word of God, and for God Hindus and Musalmans are not different. If the king harms people, they will destroy him, however powerful he might be.

In the context of his time, Shivaji's thoughts and his policy were unique and unparalleled in history. Religion had a deep impact upon people's life. But Shivaji taught to us that other religions are as great as one's own religion and that though the forms of worship in each religion are different their goal is one. The thoughts of Akbar, Dara Shikoh and Ibrahim Adil Shah were not different from this.

Shivaji was religious. He was proud of being a Hindu. He awarded large gifts to temples and Brahmins. All this is true. However, his pride in his religion was not based on the hatred

for other religions. He never thought that he could not be a great Hindu unless he hated Musalmans. Even in medieval times his faith in religion was rational.

❑❑❑

4. Shivaji - Brahmins - 96 Great Families Kulwadis - Shudras

Many titles are prefixed to Shivaji's name. *Go-Brahmin Pratipalak* (Protector of cows and Brahmins) is the most well known. It is consistently propagated that he was a protector of cows and Brahmins.

Chhatrapati Shivaji's many letters, agreed as authentic, are available now. He has not claimed, in any of these letters, to be Go-Brahmin Pratipalak. Many of his contemporaries have written to him. Nobody, even in those letters, calls him Go-Brahmin Pratipalak. On the contrary, there are 29 letters stamped after he was anointed a king. In all these letters, he calls himself *Kshatriya Kulawatans Shri Raja Shiv Chhatrapati.* He does not call himself Go-Brahmin Pratipalak. Then, where does this Go-Brahmin thing come from?

Shri. B. M. Purandare claims that Shivaji calls himself Go-Brahmin Pratipalak. Purandare has given Shiv Charitra Sadhane Vol. V, articles 534 and 537 as proof. After examining the evidence and letters thoroughly, Shejwalkar concludes that, in the article 534, Shivaji does not call himself a Go-Brahmin Pratipalak. It is the Brahmin quoted in the letter who has called Shivaji so. In the article no. 537 there is no mention of the words Go-Brahmin Pratipalak at all. Simply a white lie! There is world of difference between Shivaji calling himself Go-Brahmin Pratipalak and Brahmins claiming him to be so. Any one who has gone to a king asking for alms or, at any rate, asking for a favour would naturally call him a protector. What is so special about it?

Then who might have forcibly appended this title to

Shivaji? The cows may not have possibly done so. The answer therefore is more than clear. To attach titles to great historical figures as a matter of convenience is an act, at the most, of cleverness and cunning. Such acts go unnoticed as long as people are uneducated and they do not go to the roots of the matter. But this does not make such an act of cunning a historical truth.

Grand Duff has noted in his book that Shivaji had prohibited his soldiers to steel cows, the ryots and women. There are other proofs as well.

Then, how did Shivaji, a Pratipalak of cows, ryots and women, become, out of the blue, the Go-Brahmin Pratipalak? Who made him so? It should not be difficult to guess who substituted the ryots and women by the word Brahmin.

Brahmins do not seem to have any privileges in Shivaji's rule. On the contrary, he writes in a letter about a Brahmin who had done some mischief that although he is a Brahmin, he will not be spared. Moreover, he threatens, 'Those who behave as enemy will be treated as such.'

Just like the Marathas, all the Brahmins were not on his side. Several were opposed to him. This is all the more reason for Shivaji not to adopt the title, Go-Brahmin Pratipalak. Of course, that he had never adopted it is beyond doubt.

There is an amusing anecdote. Brahmins, to oppose Shivaji, performed a yagnya called Kot Chandi Yagnya.

Mirza Raja Jai Singh, the mighty nobleman, serving the Emperor of Delhi, came to Maharashtra to bring Shivaji to his knees. The Maharashtrian Brahmins performed this yagnya so that he would be victorious against Shivaji. A document has recorded it in an amusing fashion:

"Mirza Raja was worried that Shivaji was fond of fights, very brave and very clever. He was a very skillful warrior. He had personally killed Afzal Khan. He ran riot in the camp of Shaista-E-Khan himself. Mirza Raja was therefore worried about his own success. Then the great Brahmin priests suggested a way. He would succeed if he performed a yagnya. Then Mirza said, 'Prepare a Kot Chandi and eleven crore lingas. Chanting

should be practised to fulfill my desire. He thus arranged for four hundred Brahmins to sit for the yagnya. The yagnya and prayers continued round the clock. He set aside two crore rupees for the yagnya and it went on for three months. After completion of the yagnya the Brahmins were properly rewarded and then he set on his campaign." If Shivaji was a Brahmin Pratipalak and his rule was for the protection of Brahmins and Hindu religion why did the Brahmins perform such a massive Koti Chandi yagnya?

Brahmins' Opposition to Shivaji's Anointment as Chhatrapati

The Brahmins in Maharashtra opposed to anoint Shivaji. Now this fact is quite well known. According to the system of the *Chaaturvarnya* and Hindu law, only Brahmins and Kshatriyas had a right to be a king. Even though Shivaji was a warrior, even though he had conquered what could easily be a kingdom, the religious law said that he was not entitled to be a king. He was not suited to be one. Some doubted his being a Kshatriya. And the remaining did not bother whether he was a Kshatriya or not at all. For them, even if he belonged to the Kshatriya *kula*, he did not remain a Kshatriya because he had suffered *samskar kshaya*. His maunji was not performed. His wedding was not performed according to proper rituals. How could, then, he be king?

Some very orthodox Brahmins went to extreme. They argued, *Nandantam Kshatriya Kulam*. The Kshatriya ended with the end of Nanda dynasty. No Kshatriya survived after. Krishna Bhat Shesha wrote, in Akbar's time, a treatise called *Shudrachar Shiromani*. He argued in it that Parashuram had wiped out all the Kshatriyas from the face of the earth. Now no Kshatriyas, with kingly qualities and belonging to kingly dynasty, are found in Hindu religion. How was Shivaji to be anointed in such a situation?

Not a single Brahmin from Maharashtra was ready to perform the rituals associated with anointment. Then Gaga Bhatta was brought from Benares and he anointed Shivaji by performing Vedik rituals. Gaga Bhatta's family was originally from Nanded in Maharashtra. But he was well known as a scholar from Benares. Shivaji gave him and other Brahmins

Noluminous and Sumptnous gifts. It is said that they were given so much gold that it was too heavy for them to carry down the Rajgadh.

Shivaji's Brahmin Comrades

Brahmins from Maharashtra had opposed Shivaji's anointment. We have also seen how they had performed a yagnya for Mirza Raja Jai Singh's victory over Shivaji. But it would be totally wrong if one were to conclude from this that all the Brahmins from Maharashtra were opposed to Shivaji.

The question was not of a personal nature. It was not about one kind of Brahmin community or another. Nor was it about any particular priest. The basic question was of the Chaaturvarnya. The question persists even today.

Dharma ordains that Shudras cannot become kings. This is because they are born of Prajapita's feet. It is their religious duty to serve the three upper varnas. God partially exists in a king. It is just not possible for God to be present in a Shudra. Thus religion insists that a Shudra can never become a king. A Musalman can be a king, but a Shudra cannot. This is what the orthodox Hindu religion says. It was therefore religion itself that was opposed to Shivaji's anointment. It was not the opposition by all Brahmins as such. In fact there were many Brahmins who lent their hand in constructing the swaraj. Dadoji Kondadeo was his Guru. There is bitter disagreement over whether Ramdas guided Shivaji or not. Let us leave the controversy to the scholars to decide. But there can be no doubt about Dadoji Kondadeo's role in training Shivaji as a warrior and a statesman. Moropant Pingale was his Peshwa, Prime Minister. Moropant, Anaji Datto and Dattaji Trimbak were not only his ministers but they were also accomplished warriors. History has recorded how, in that thrilling episode of the Great Escape from Agra, Tryambakpant Dabir and Raghunathpant Korde, two Brahmins from Maharashtra and Krishnaji Kashi and Visaji, Brahmins from the North, made an invaluable contribution.

It was not the question of Brahmins as such. It was of the orthodox Hindu religion. It was of the historical limitations. Shivaji himself had accepted those limitations. This is the reason why such apparently ridiculous events could take place

at that time.

To counter the objection that Shivaji had lost samskaras, Gaga Bhatta performed his maunji when Shivaji was 44 years old. He was wedded once again accompanied by the chanting of the mantras. Shivaji had to give away large amount of gold and then only he was anointed.

The opportunist fundamentalists of today try to attach the title "the Protector of Hindu Religion" to Shivaji. But can they cover the historical truth that the same Hindu religion and the same such Protectors of Religion had opposed his anointment; that they had made him get his maunji done at the age of forty four and got him married to his wife second time. How ridiculous!

Of course Shivaji himself followed his religion. He had limitations of his contemporary religion and his times. Even great men are subject to the constraints of their historical time, the constraints of the circumstances. Shivaji too was subject to such constraints and limitations.

Some tend to extol some of Shivaji's deeds irrespective of historical constraints. Some people make such ridiculous statements as, Shivaji's state was secular state, Shivaji was the real "socialist" etc. Of course this is not true. Shivaji was a king in a feudal society and therefore he could not have been secular. It was impossible that he would be socialist. More important is his foresight, far superior to his contemporaries. What surprises us is the progressive measures he took in many matters. What is different is the way he showed compassion and affection for the ryots. We all know that Shivaji's first coronation took place at Raigad, on 5th June 1674. But his one more coronation was performed. Not many know about this. This second coronation was done about three months after the first one.

There was a Yajurvedi Tantrik called Nishchalpuri Gosavi. He met Shivaji after the first coronation. Shivaji's mother, great Jijabai, died on the thirteenth day after coronation. His Chief of Army, Prataprao Gujar, too died. One of Shivaji's wives, Kashibai, also died. This Nishchalpuri claimed that all these tragedies took place because Gaga Bhatta had committed

certain mistakes in performing the rites at the time of the coronation. The day he had fixed was not auspicious. Various deities were not satisfied, as they were not offered animal sacrifices. As a consequence, claimed the Gosavi, all these calamities happened.

Shivaji and his advisors were believers. They were wary of committing any 'sins.' Of course, they had limitations of the contemporary times and level of consciousness. Accepting Nishchalpuri's argument, another coronation was done. Yagnyas were performed and many more gifts distributed to Brahmins. There is no other instance in history anywhere in the world of the same person being coronated two times! Of course double coronation and giving away gifts to deities and Brahmins does not seem to have helped. After his coronation Shivaji survived for merely six years and he died at a relatively early age.

The conclusion to be drawn from this is that we should look at these instances of Shivaji's two coronations in the context of the level of consciousness of those times only.

Opposition of '96 Families' to Shivaji

It was not only Brahmins who considered Shivaji as a Shudra or belonging to low caste. The Maratha noblemen belonging to the so called *96 Great Families* regarded themselves as Kshatriya and were not initially ready to concede to his claim to be King. There are 96 surnames included in the list of these proud and superior families. Bhonsle is not one of them. Even today the Marathas who arrange marriages on the basis of caste-family status and traditions treat the persons having the surname Bhonsle as lowly.

Almost many of the Marathas belonging to the 96 Great Families proclaimed themselves to be kings. Shinde Raje, More Raje etc. They had no kingdoms. But they called themselves Kings. Almost all Marathas in Ahmednagar district (and some others as well) attach the title Patil to their surname, e.g., Landage-Patil, Kolhe-Patil, Kale-Patil, Vikhe-Patil etc. They are all Patils!

An instance of how those 96 Family Marathas treated Shivaji is widely and very often retold. More of Jawali was a

nobleman of the Shah of Vijapur. He was called "Raje." Added to this he carried a title, "Chandrarao." Shivaji made efforts to enlist his services for the cause of the Swaraj. He sent letters. He also sent his emissavies. When Chandrarao did not respond to these genuine efforts, Shivaji sent a missive of warning: If Chandrarao was not ready to join hands, Jawali would be captured and More arrested. More sent an arrogant reply: You a King? You become a King because you choose to call yourself one? If you are eating your meal, finish it and come to Jawali to wash hands. Let's fight!

Of course Shivaji fulfilled More's wish. Shivaji went to war with him and captured Jawali. The point to note is: More called himself King and refused to accept Shivaji's claim to kingship.

The story of Ranjhe Patil is no differerit. He had raped a poor peasant girl. He was therefore arrested and brought before Shivaji. When Shivaji pronounced the sentence, Ranjhe Patil said to Dadoji Kondadeo who was present there, "Justice should be pronounced by a proper authority."

Patil was very clear in what he meant. The right to pronounce justice is given to King, or a Brahmin, a high-caste, or the court of a caste. Shivaji is neither a King, nor high caste. He therefore has no right to judge. If one were to go by the shastras, religious texts, Ranjhe Patil was absolutely right. But Shivaji set aside what the texts said and pronounced the verdict himself. In spite of Patil's high-caste arrogance, Shivaji summoned him. Even so, Patil did not go with the person who went to fetch him. He said to the emissary, 'Tell your Shivaji, you're a titular king. But I'm not a titular Patil. I'm a Patil, a real officer of the village. For me the people of my village are like concubines.'

In short, whether high-caste Brahmins or high-caste Marathas, they were not initially prepared to accept Shivaji as their leader and King.

Shivaji too had to suffer the inequities imposed by the system of the four varnas. He found a way out within the given religious framework because he followed his religion. He got his anointment done as per the wishes and rights of Brahmins. He was the King of a kingdom that he had won by his own

strength, by bravery, and by clever strategies and tactics. Even Aurang Zeb respected him. But Hindu religion did not respect him. That is why he had to get his coronation performed two times. He had to obtain the consent of religion.

Kulwadi Bhushan

Mahatma Jotirao Phule has written a ballad on Shivaji. Right at the beginning of this ballad Phule calls Shivaji "Kulwadi Bhushan" (Jewel in the Crown of Peasants). He concludes the ballad, "Jotirao Phule sings, son of Kshudra." In short, Shivaji Bhonsla was a son of the Shudras. He was a peasant. Mahatma Phule was not a researcher or a historian. He was an active social reformer committed to the cause of equality. One may argue therefore that Phule was biased in a particular way and there was no historical support to his claims. But even there appears a disagreement among historians over this. They write tentatively and great hesitation. But, at the least, they hold differing views.

Shejwalkar has compiled a record of some information about Shivaji's family in his draft biography of Shivaji. There is the following entry :

Rana Bhim Singh of Udepur had a son called Bagh Singh born of a concubine. After Rana's death Bagh Singh's Sisode Rajput brethren did not accept him as their brother. Therefore he went to Khandesh first and then buying land near Pune he became a landlord. He had four children of whom Maloji and Bamboji were two.(*Bundela's Bakhar*, tr. P. N. Patwardhan, 1920, p. 1)

It is being recorded at many places that Shivaji was a Rajput. Mahamahopadhyaya Datto Waman Potdar, an eminent scholar, has studied all such evidence. He says, "It is very difficult to decide the lineage of the family. Many later documents, even some belonging to the period immediately prior to Shahu Maharaj, have recorded how enquiries were made as to whether most of the families belonged to Sisodias or not at all. There were differences about their previous lineage being of Sisodias. I personally do not doubt that Shivaji was a Rajput and his Bhonsle family was one of the Sisodias of Rajputana. In fact Shahaji in one of his letters makes it a point

to say, 'I'm a Rajput.' This makes the matter more than clear."

Whether Shivaji was Kshatriya by birth is a meaningless controversy. Some people may claim, implicitly or explicitly, greatness by citing their being related to Shivaji. 'Shivaji was a Kshatriya - I'm a Kshatriya too.' Or, 'Shivaji's surname was Bhonsla. I'm also a Bhonsla. Thus they automatically become great. Let them. Those who have nothing else, apart from the caste or family lineage, to claim for their greatness are free to discuss the lineage of Shivaji's family. Shivaji's achievements are of greater significance than his family's antecedents. It is not in one's hand in which family to take birth. But it is certainly in our hands what to do of the life we have got, at least much of it! Of course, those who do not have any ability to do anything significant will only sing the paeans of lineages and racial superiority.

Shivaji's Peasant Comrades

However, if anybody uses Shivaji's name to reestablish the superiority of the varna's, they will have to answer for a historical fact. Who had participated in Shivaji's historical work? The majority of his colleagues in this Herculean task were not from the higher castes. Nor were they noblemen or landlords and other feudatories. They rose from the lower strata of society.

They came from the low castes. They were poor peasants.

The mavlas were the backbone of his work. They had great tenacity of facing adversities. They had pure, unblemished loyalty to and love for Shivaji. Shivaji's unparallel acts of bravery could be possible only because of their boundless sacrifice for his cause. All these mavlas were only peasants.

The established noblemen and feudal lords did not help Shivaji initially in any significant way. But Shivaji created new lieutenants and generals, small and big. They were all born in poor families. But they became great by their bravery and contribution to the making of swaraj.

Shiva, the person who helped Shivaji to escape from the Fort Panhala, which was under tight siege, was a barber. Shivaji had taken Jiva Mahala, an agile fighter and trusted soldier, with

him when he went to assassinate Afzal Khan. This Jiva Mahala too was a barber. His surname was Sankpal. He belonged to the village Mauje Kondivali in the Jawali Province. He was only a common ryots.

The Chief of Shivaji's Intelligence Service was Bahirjee Naik, of Ramoshi caste. Shivaji thus took with him the peasants who lived by toiling in fields and established his kingdom. The farming caste of Maratha-Kumbis was considered by the tradition as Shudra only.

History has not only recorded personal evidences of this kind. It also has recorded how whole communities participated in Shivaji's historical undertaking.

There is an entry in the Sabhasad Bakhar. Shivaji employed people from the castes such as Berad, Ramoshi, Adekari etc. according to their qualities and abilities. As a consequence, crimes and similar nuisances were nonexistent in his rule. If people branded as criminals get an opportunity to utilize their ability and bravery, they do not generally resort to traditional antisocial activities.

The naval force that Shivaji raised was also not with the help of the traditional Kshatriyas or Marathas. Just as his Naval Chief was a Musalman, most of the sailors and soldiers were Koli, Sonkoli, Bhandari and Musalman. Shivaji transformed those who toiled in the sea for their living into soldiers. Shivaji turned the commoners into great people. They in turn made him a great king. Both came together to fulfill a tremendous task.

A good idea, when common people accept it, becomes a force and such force makes the commons to perform uncommon deeds. Extraordinary events in history do not take place unless the common people participate in them.

Those belonging to elite families were always established ones. Naturally, they did not want a change in the status quo. Those who were common and poor desired change. Shivaji organized them; he enlightened them, gave them status and put a halt to injustice. Those who suffer injustice come forward to destroy it. Those who perpetrate injustice do not end it.

Shivaji and Conversions

Shivaji followed Hindu religion. However, he was not an intolerant Hindu. On many occasions he did several things, which were not acceptable to religion. For him his historical cause was more valuable than anything else; strict adherance to religious dictats was not. What does religion say? Becoming Musalman is to lose Dharma. Forsaking Dharma is like dying. How is it possible to bring the dead back to life? Moreover, if someone who commits a sin in this life, cannot take birth of a human in the next. He will be born an insect. This is what Hindu dharmashastra tells us. In Shivaji's time it told this in much harsher words. But Shivaji reconverted all those Hindus who had embraced Islam. Not only that, he also established with them relations through marriage. Shivaji did not feel that they had left the religion and had therefore become outcaste.

Bajaji Nimbalkar and Netaji Palkar had become Musalmans and were even circumcised. They had been Muslims for about a decade or so. He reconverted them to Hindu religion. Shivaji married off his daughter to Bajaji Nimbalkar who was ridiculed as 'a short one' (for being circumcised). He purified Netaji Palkar, who had lived in Afghanistan for eight years, and brought him back to his fold.

This approach to religion was forsaken under the rule of the Peshwas.The society had become so parochial that the bravest of the Peshwas, Bajirao, could not make his own son, born of Musaiman Mastani, a Hindu. His name was Samsher Bahadur. Bajirao wanted to call him Krishnarao. Let alone rename his child; Bajirao himself had to leave the family.

Were these two Hindu religions, one of Shivaji and the other of the Peshwas the same? Shivaji had made the untouchables and Mahars chiefs of his forts. In Peshwai the untouchables were made to tie brooms to their waist so that the roads they walked on were automatically swept. They were forced to hang earthen pot around their neck so that the roads did not become impure by their spittoon. Was Shivaji's Hindu religion the same as Peshwa's Hindu religion? Which of these two versions of Hindu religion does the Senapati, who has taken upon himself the task of uniting the Hindus, want to establish?

Shivaji's Hindu religion or Peshwa's?

There is an amusing episode noted by history, which shows that Shivaji was against superstition. It was believed that it was inauspicious if a child were to be born upside down (with his stomach to the ground). Shivaji's son, Rajaram, was born like this. Everybody was dumbstruck. None would show the happiness of the childbirth. Shivaji heard of this. He said, 'It is symbolic. My son is born upside down. It means he will turn the empire upside down.' It was then that all started the revelry of the childbirth.

Faith is one thing; superstition and fundamentalism quite another.

❑❑❑

5. Distortion of History — Why?

Shivaji - an incarnation?

There are a large number of people who sincerely believe that Shivaji was genuinely an incarnation of God. Some call him Shiva's incarnation, and some Vishnu's. It does not take too long in our country and traditions for humans to become Gods. Leave alone great men, Indian languages have a special word to describe a good man : *Dev Manoos* : godlike person.

We treat anyone who is great in any respect, one who has done some work that is useful to people's welfare as god. Just as this can be considered as simple faith in god, it can be also cunning on some people's part. Unless a god is created the so-called worshipper cannot fulfill his personal motives. Thus gods are made to be of use to some. We do not know if Shivaji's contemporaries had turned him into an avatar, an incarnation. But he was definitely supposed to have possessed some miraculous powers. Shivaji could fly like birds. He appeared out of a wall before Shaista Khan. He had the vanishing power. Such descriptions can be found in plenty. Of course these are all false. Shivaji could have benefited to earn loyalty of his followers and succeed by such rumors. But there is a difference between ignorance and history.

Shivaji was a human being. He was a good man. He was a great man. He was intelligent. He had foresight. He was a man of morals. He was also pragmatic. He was brave, a great warrior and a skilled organizer. But he was human. He was not god. He was not an avatar.

What are the consequences of turning him into a god? If he is made god we get away from the responsibility of

emulating him. If someone tells, 'Behave the way Shivaji did; Don't trouble the ryot; Don't shield the rapists; Don't touch the stem of ryot's crop; Love your own religion but do not hate others' religion', pat comes the reply: How can we compare ourselves with Shivaji? He was a god's avatar. We're humans. How can we hope to behave like him? We will behave the way we can. As Shivaji is only a god, it is enough to worship his image once a year, to only celebrate his birth anniversary, collect donations in his name, spend some of it on some program and gobble the rest, actually to spend very little and misappropriate the most of it, arrange processions, apply tilak to forehead - this is all. One calls oneself a *Shivabhakta,* and hopes to garner influence.However he does not feel obliged to followed Shivaji's exmple. Shivaji came to ryot's help. Do these hypocrite *bhaktas* help the ryots? Actually they make use of Shivaji's name to threaten people. Shivaji's portrait and his flag are raised aloft on illicit distilleries, gambling dens and such similar activities. This is a misuse of Shivaji. We must understand who Shivaji was and put a stop to this misuse. We must understand who Shivaji was so that we can distinguish between his true followers and the hypocrites.

Shivaji and Bhawani Sword

One more reason for Shivaji's exemplary success has been embedded among the minds of the ryots as well as half educated people. It is said again and again that he succeeded because Goddess Mother Bhawani had blessed him.

One of the Chief Ministers of Maharashtra was busy becoming popular by trying to retrieve this sword. On the other hand some other leader is cynically using, over and again, Shivaji's name to capture political power.

Researchers have proved that the sword that Shivaji used had been actually made in Portugal. The technique of forging swords from various metals was much more advanced in Portugal. Portuguese brought this sword to Goa. From there it went to Sawants and from them to Shivaji. Mother Bhawani is in no way connected to this sword. There is a sword kept in the museum at Satara. It is said that it was this sword that was actually used by Shivaji. Now, there is a dispute whether

this is the Bhawani sword. But there is a Portuguese inscription on it. Anyone can see it, even now.

Those who use people's ignorance and their faith as their capital for various gains are not prepared to let people know the truth. It is not possible to understand the real Shivaji and Mother Bhawani by shouting Jai-Shivaji and Jai-Bhawani every morning and every evening.

Phony Followers - Threat to Shivaji

Great heroes are again and again subjected to a tragedy. The people in power and forces of his own time oppose him when he is alive. They oppose the principles he stands for and the work he undertakes. If possible, they kill him. They do everything that they can do to finish him and his work. But unfortunately for them they do not succeed in destroying his greatness. Common people accept him when he is alive, and his thoughts after he is no more. They try to emulate him. Now those who had opposed him play a clever trick. They themselves become that hero's ardent devotees. They worship him. They celebrate his anniversaries. They build temples for them. They print his portraits. While doing all this they play a subtle trick. They distort the thoughts of people's welfare that those heroes had propounded. In fact, they try hard to wipe out those thoughts. They take great care that their antiestablishment views do not reach the masses. They see that their teachings of rebelling against the establishment do not reach the oppressed. They deceive people—they write false history. They teach false history. They sell adulterated history, adroitly mixing truth with a lot of untruth. They utilize the antiestablishment ideology to reinforce their own conservative position.

These charlatans, under the garb of the leaders of society, pick up the images and symbols that people revere. They distort those symbols and images and destroy their very core. The established people are very clever. Some are established because they have power; some because they possess wealth; some because they have social status. In fact, they are all one.

This happened in case of many in the past. It happens today also. Dnyaneshwar brought knowledge from Sanskrit into Prakrit. He finished the monopoly of the handful. He freed

knowledge for people. He imparted knowledge to the lowest among the ignorant. He did so in the language they could understand. He even made a buffalo recite Vedas; of course, the buffalo standing here as a metaphor for the most ignorant. He rebelled against the monopolists of knowledge.

These monopolists of knowledge persecuted him in his lifetime. Calling him and his siblings offspring of sanyasis, they outcaste them. They refused to perform his maunji. (Unfortunately, he did not have millions of gold coins and also he did not meet a Gaga Bhatta. Otherwise, just as Shivaji got his coronation done he too could have got his maunji done.) Dnyaneshwar took samadhi at a very young age (Did he really take samadhi?).

The cultural, religious and material heirs of those very people who had in Dnyaneshwar's lifetime persecuted him and opposed the spread of knowledge, started singing his eulogies. They started proclaiming that history has not seen any other person as great as Dnyaneshwar. But they, chanting his name day in and day out, started denying the common people the right to knowledge; started prohibiting them from becoming educated. Even the saints themselves had boycotted Chakradhar a saint who had written texts in Prakrit even before Dnyaneshwar.

In Tukaram's lifetime Mambaji and his colleagues persecuted Tukaram. They drowned his *abhangs* in river. They drowned his *Gatha* in Indrayani river and we do not know what they did to him. But they spread a wild rumor that he went, body and soul, directly to the vaikuntha, the heavenly abode. The aeroplane, which came from the heaven to take him, was painted in pictures and even shown in movies!

Even after they were drowned in the river, Tukaram's *abhangs* remained with people. People went on singing them. When the heirs to Mambaji and his ilk saw that even after drowning his *abhangs* and sending him to the heaven they could not finish him, they started eulogizing him. They began interpolating their own *abhangs* into his as his authentic *abhangs*. They started singing *kirtans* and telling stories based on them. But they played their regular trick. They took caution that the whiplashes that Tukaram had used against superstitions and all kinds of injustice did not reach the masses.

Do we need to go that far in the past? What did they do to Mahatma Gandhi? They assassinated him with a well-hatched plan. They conspired and killed him. Some of those who took part in the conspiracy escaped with cleverness. Some were hanged. Some underwent the sentence given to them. Now they say, 'A mad man killed Gandhiji.' Were the conspirators lunatics?

When Mahatma Gandhi was assassinated sweets were distributed and merrily relished. Nathuram Godse was felicitated as a martyr. Now what do Nathuram Godse's colleagues and his followers say? They claim that they have adopted Gandhi's ideology supplemented with socialism! What cheek!

When they saw that Mahatma Gandhi could not be finished they themselves pretended to have become his followers and then find a new way of finishing him. Many such examples can be found in the world history.

If Shivaji were to appear Today...

The effort to distort Shivaji, like they did in case of Dnyaneshwar, Tukaram and Mahatma Gandhi, has been on for some time. It is being continued with renewed vigour.

Shivaji was against doling out privy privileges. He avoided throughout his life to give feudal rights. Today's Shivabhaktas are creating newer and newer principalities. They are telling the modern princes and feudal prodigals, do whatever you want in your principality. Loot the ryots the way you like eat, drink and amuse yourselves. Only, support us for running the 'government.' Then we'll also loot the ryots. You loot them in small ways. We'll loot them in big ways. You embezzle in thousands, in lakhs perhaps; we'll embezzle in crores. So, it is true that there are no principalities of old type in our times. But new principalities and new princes are emerging and growing in strength and number. There are principalities of Zilla Parishads in all districts. The sugar barons are nothing but new princes. Different Govertment Corporations, large Cooperatives, Municipalities, Legislatures have all been turned into fiefs and these fiefs are being passed on to the other members of the family.

Democracy calls for decentralization of power. But decentralization does not mean that power be inherited within the family. These new feudal lords exploit and oppress the ryots more than they did at Shivaji's times. If a ryot dares to go against the interests of a sugar baron he is finished. He does not get any loan, does not get fertilizers, his sugarcane is kept drying in the field. He bites dust within two years; others look at him, learn a "proper lesson" and refrain from daring the baron. The baron becomes invincible.

Don't these new barons and princes cast their evil eye on innocent daughters of the ryot? Don't rapes take place? Hasn't the ryot emaciated in serving and entertaining these modern princes in Shivaji's Maharashtra where the ryot's Raja had always insisted that not a single stem of ryot's crop would be harmed in his state?

All this happens shouting *Shivaji Maharaj ki Jai*. Is it not a shame? What if Shivaji himself was present to see all this? What would he have done? Of course he is not present. He can't be present. But don't we have his teachings with us? The true way of remembering Shivaji is to finish these new princes.

Today Hindu-Muslim riots are taking place in Shivaji's name and shouting his slogans. We must tell these religious fanatics that Shivaji himself was not fanatic. He had faith in Hindu religion; but he did not hate Islamic religion. He believed in God but he was not superstitious.

Just as Hindus have rioters among them, there are rioters among Musalmans as well. They too have their own religious fanatics. Some Musalmans believe that they are heirs of some Shehan Shah. They think that once they were the rulers of this country. They forget that even when Muslim kings were ruling. all the Musalmans were not eating only biryani and drinking sharab. Majority of Musalmans were very poor.

But what about those who spilled their blood, who sacrificed their life for swaraj? Were they not your forefathers? Was Aurang Zeb your forefather and was Madari Mehtar nobody? Adil Shah was your forefather and were Ibrahim Khan, Daulat Khan and Kazi Hyder nobody? Shivaji's swaraj was not

for Hindus alone. It was for the Musalmans in Maharashtra as well. Then, shouldn't the Maharashtrian Musalmans accept Shivaji as theirs?

Just as Musalmans, under Shivaji's name, are attacked, dalits too are attacked. The same slogan this time also : *Jai Bhawani, Jai Shivaji.* They oppose reservation for dalits. But they conveniently forget that Shivaji had consciously enrolled dalits in service. He had given them prestige.

Why Is History Distorted?

A tendency is always found in case of heroes, whether modern or from the past. Their life story, their thoughts, and their motives: these are all and always distorted. Why?

This does not happen unintentionally. Some of it may originate in ignorance. But most of it is a product of deliberate mischief. It is done to serve some vested interests. Whatever the difference, the consequences are the same.

What Have They Done to Shivaji?

What have they together done to Shivaji? Have they made Shivaji bigger or smaller during the last fifty years? What has happened in terms of his acceptance across the regions? Has it grown or lessened?

Fifty years ago his portraits used to be displayed outside Maharashtra also. They were displayed in Madhya Pradesh. They were put up in Karnataka in the South. They were hung in Baroda or Gujarat. During the Samyukta Maharashtra Movement we all woke up to the Maharashtrian identity taking inspiration from Shivaji. Of course the movement of Samyukta Maharashtra for a linguistic Marathi state was quite justified. It was certainly justified to politically remember Shivaji as he had prepared a Rajya Bhasha Kosha. However we did not observe the limits of propriety. One of the stalwarts of the Samyukta Maharashtra Movement used to say in speeches, 'Maharashtra has History whereas others have Geography only!' Of course, it used to evoke a tremendous applause. This was extremism. Shivaji is dear to Maharashtra. Just as Maharashtra has history of Shivaji, doesn't Karnataka have history of Rani Channamma? Doesn't Rajastan have Rana

Pratap's history? Are the states of Madhya Pradesh and Gujarat of recent origin? True, a sense of propriety was lost in the heat of propaganda. Finally we succeeded in making Samyukta Maharashtra. However, we, at the same time, put Shivaji in the confines of the walls of Maharashtra. Shivaji, who was also popular outside, was made to belong to Maharashtra alone. What is now happening in Maharashtra? Shiv Sena was founded in the sixties. This Party invokes Shivaji's name in whatever it does, against Non-Maharashtrians or against Muslims. These forces have founded many more outfits: Hindu Ekta, Maratha Maha Sangh, Patit Pawan Sanghatana - all of these chant Shivaji's name. Shivaji, who belonged to the whole of Maharashtra, was now made to represent the Maharashtrian Hindus. He was made Go-Brahmin Pratipalak. Maratha Maha Sangh makes him represent Marathas alone. When they opposed the reservations the slogan they raised was *Shivaji Maharaj ki Jai.* When dalit hamlets were attacked in Marathwada and elsewhere, again the slogan used was *Jai Shivaji, Jai Bhawani.* Thus Shivaji was made a caste Hindu. He was brought into the fold of Brahmins, he was made to belong to 96 families, genuine or not, of Marathas. That too post-facto.

Shivaji was cynically used to serve selfish interests. Similar thing had happened at the time of the World War-II. The British wanted to enlist the Indian youth to enlist in the armed services. They printed posters with Shivaji's picture on it calling upon 'you mavlas of Shivaji! Enlist today! Shivaji was brave; you too are brave. Join the War!' Those who had forced the country into slavery used Shivaji. Now those who are hell bent upon dividing the country, those who are dividing the poor ryots on the basis of caste and religion, are again using him.

It may be their business to do it. But why should we make it our own? Why should we allow them to do so? They tell either false history or do not tell it at all. They only shout *Jai.* We must tell true history, not merely shout *Jai.*

Those who are well off in terms of power, wealth, status and knowledge do not use force alone to maintain it. They do not use only weapons, truncheons and the state. They use ideas. They use history. They tell such ideas to people; they make them digest such philosophy; they teach them such

history, which is useful to maintain their own superiority. Such thought and philosophy, such false, half-true and distorted history help to maintain the status quo. Thought is a very effective weapon. It lasts long. It is superior to gun. The rulers always use this weapon against the oppressed.

Thus, there are those who have something that they are safeguard afraid of losing. They use all the weapons to their privilege. What they possess. Thought is the most powerful weapon in their hand. Similarly there are those who do not have anything to lose. They do not have power, wealth, status or knowledge. In order to secure all these the dispossessed also need to sharpen the weapon of their ideology :

Change is not possible without ideas, without thoughts. This is the reason why the ryots today must fathom into Shivaji's history. It should be interpreted in a meaningful way. Whatever is worthless in history must be consigned to the dust bin. Whatever valuable, must be examined properly. New progressive ideas must be added to them. Such new updated ideas must be carried over to the next stage of history.

There is a lot in Shivaji's history, his ideas, and his practice; there is much in the inspiring forces behind his cause and achievements. All this can be extremely beneficial to today's ryots. We must understand all this properly and take it ahead.

❑❑❑

Shivaji's Letters

Letter to Jumledars, Havaldars and Clerks of Chiplun

19th May 1673

Shri Bhavani Shankar

The Royal army was to camp in the Province of Chiplun. Food grains and other goods were stored at Dabhol as reserves for the monsoon. However, these were supplied to the army. All the grains and hay was spent on the maintenance of the army. As a consequence, the ryots suffered a great deal. Moreover, because of the summer, the cavalry too had to camp. We tried to meet the expenses by borrowing money from the Clerk and from various forts. If you do not utilize these resources judiciously, if you go on squandering it listlessly it will soon be exhausted and you will end up without food in pouring rains; you will starve and the horses will start dying. It will mean that you have been responsible for their death. Then you may end up causing trouble to the ryots. Some of you will extract grains from peasants, some bread, some hay, some firewood and some vegetables. If you resort to such acts, whoever of the peasants have stayed back to save themselves from loot and oppression will at once start leaving. Many will starve to death. It will mean that you are worse than the Mughal invaders! The ryots will curse you! The whole blame will befall you. So you better understand this, whether you are a sepoy or a soldier, you must not burden the villagers with a leaf or a twig. We have provided from the royal treasury. Whatever one requires, be it food or hay for cattle or firewood or vegetables: go to the bazaars and buy whatever you need.

There is no need to apply force on anyone to feed you. The supplies must be utilized economically so that they suffice for the entire monsoon. Take as much ration as is being supplied by clerks; use it in such a way that no one starves and that the horses grow healthy day by day. There is no need of threatening the clerks, demanding from them anything at will, and attacking or looting the stores or warehouses. As you are aware, these are the days of summer and soldiers are camping in wooden houses. Some are likely to light bonfires, some will set up ovens at wrong places, some will want to light tobacco. Hay is strewn around. If anybody is not careful when the wind is blowing, it may cause a great disaster. Once a house catches fire, it will spread to other houses as well. If the tiniest of cinders touches a straw, fire will engulf all the hay around. After this, whether you behead peasants or threaten the clerks there will not be any wood left to build any more places for your camp. Everyone must understand this. Therefore, all those responsible are hereby ordered that they take rounds, that they take care so that fire does not break as a result of bonfires, ovens and wicks of lamps as mice are apt to take away the burning wicks. Everything possible must be done to protect hay. It will ensure the survival of the horses through the rains. If this is not done, there will be no horses to look after, no horses to be fed. No cavalry! You will be without the burden of looking after them! This is the reason why I have written in detail. All those important Jumledars, Havaldars and Clerks are to hereby pay proper heed to this detail. You are all to be on your toes. You are all to collect proper information and act accordingly. Anyone who ignores this, anyone who makes a mistake, will defame the name of Maratha. How is he, then, to get employment? Nobody shall deviate from this because none shall be spared.

❑❑❑

Letter No. 2

Letter to Subedar on Revenue

5th September 1676

Shri Shankar

Greetings from Rajashri Shivaji Raje to Ramaji Anant Subedar of Prebhavali Province.

You have been serving the State with honesty and without defrauding it. Similarly, you are expected to look after the cultivation of crops, from sowing to harvesting, without a desire for personal gains. There is crop- sharing observed all over the state. Shares of the tenants and the State should be properly divided. If the ryots are tricked in any manner you shall face the royal displeasure. It is not my order that money be collected from the ryots. You are not supposed to collect money to the value of food grains. You must collect our share of grains themselves. Those are to be later sold for a better price. The State should profit from such a sale. All the tax in kind must be collected on the basis of the yields. It should be then properly stored and sold in proper season. The whole transaction should be planned in such a manner that the goods should be sold at proper time and at a high price only and there must not be any waste either. You must sell, in this fashion, coconut, betel nut, pepper etc. If you sell goods at a profit at ten bazaars, you will also get a proper benefit from it. The ryots should be empowered and you should help them in planting crops. For this you must take great efforts and visit every village. You should call all the tenants in the village together and identify who can cultivate which and how much land depending upon their ability to put in human labour and other capacities. There may be those who are handicapped

because they do not possess bullocks, plough, or food to eat. They should be paid cash enough to buy a pair of bullocks and grains to eat. Let them till the land as much as they can. No interest should be charged on this loan and only capital amount should be collected from them as and when they are in a condition of repaying. I shall not object even if you have to spend about two lacs on this. Only you must ensure that the money thus spent reaches the beneficiary and that all fallow land is brought under cultivation. This encourages the peasant to work more. He is exempted from paying whatever he owes to the treasury due to losses that he has suffered. Report to your senior officer on these matters and he will issue the proper order of exemption. I am sure you will perform your duty with proper care and discretion.

❑❑❑

Letter No. 3

Letter to Aurang Zeb about Zizia Tax

Circa 1657

From Shivaji, True to His Words, to Aurang Zeb

I had to leave, due to a quirk of Destiny, without a farewell.

After we our return we hear that the Emperor's treasury has become empty. It is also learnt that the government of the Empire is running its daily administration by collecting zizia from Hindus. In fact, formerly, Emperor Akbar ruled with great equanimity. Therefore, apart from the Daudis and Mohammedis, the religious practices of Hindus such as Brahmins and Shevades were protected. The Emperor helped these religions. Therefore, he was hailed as a Jagatguru. This ensured success to him in all the endeavours that he undertook. He conquered land after land. After him Emperor Nuruddin Jehangir ruled for twenty-two years with the blessings of the Almighty and went to the heaven. Shah Jehan too ruled for thirty-two years. They were brave Emperors and earned great respect. They established many new practices. They too were capable of levying the zizia. But all, small and big, follow their own religion and are God's children. In spite of all this they never resorted to injustice. Even now all sing in their praise. All, big and small, feel blessed by them. One reaps as one sows. Those Emperors had always their eyes fixed on people's welfare. Now, under your rule, you have lost many forts and provinces. The rest are also likely to be lost. This is because you do not spare in doing everything that is base. The ryots have become miserable. None of the revenue divisions is paying you even one per cent of its total produce. Even the Emperor and his progeny are living in impoverished condition. It is therefore not hard to imagine under what conditions the other lords must be living. In sum, soldiers

are frustrated, merchants are howling and Musalmans are crying. Hindus burn from within. Several cannot get sufficient food to eat. Is this governance? Over and above this is zizia. The word has spread east and west, far and wide, that the Emperor of Hindustan levies zizia on Fakirs, Brahmins, Shevades, Jogis, Sanyasis, Bairagis, poor and miserable. The Emperor takes pride in this and even surpasses Emperor Timur's deeds. The Quran is a Heavenly Book. It is God's utterance. It commands that God belongs to all Musalmans and, in fact, the entire world. Good or bad, both are God's creation. In masjids, it is He who is prayed. In temples, it is He for whom the bells are tolled. To oppose anyone's religion is like forsaking one's own religion. It is wiping out what God wrote; it is to blame God Himself. You should therefore discriminate between good and bad. This is all the more necessary as defaming matter is like defaming the Creator of the matter Himself. Zizia can in no way be called just. Sultan Ahmed Gujrathi ruled in this manner and soon bit dust. Those who are made to suffer injustice finally blow out smoke through their mouth hotter than even the fire that burns the Devil. The perpetrator burns out faster than the Devil himself. So it is advisable that the soiled mind is washed sooner than later. Above all this, if you feel that the true religion is in persecuting Hindus, you should first collect the zizia from Raja Jai Singh. Others will easily follow suit. The poor are like ants and gnats. There is nothing heroic in persecuting them. It is very surprising to see that even loyal ones blatantly try to hide fire under hay. So be it. Let the Sun of the Empire shine bright from the Eastern Mountains of Heroism.

❑❑❑

Notes and References

1. Sabhasad Krishnaji Anant, *Sabhasadachi Bakhar* (ed. P. N. Joshi) pp. 23-24
2. Sardesai G. S., *Shakakarta Shivaji*, pp. 26 and 36-37
3. Sabhasad Krishnaji Anant, *op. cit.* p. 25
4. *ibid.* p. 26
5. *ibid.* p. 26 and Kulkarni A. R., *Shivkalin Maharashtra*, pp. 74-75
6. Deshpande P. N., *Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharajanchi Patre*, pp. 4-5
7. Bakaskar (ed.), 91 *Kalami Bakhar*, p. 144 and Pagadi Setu Madhavrao, *Chhatrapati Shivaji*, pp. 292-93
8. Sarkar J. N., *Shivaji and his Times*, p. 365
9. Deshpande P. N., *op. cit.* pp. 197 -98
10. Ramchandrapant Amatya, *Adnyapatre* (ed. P. N. Joshi), pp. 43-44
11. Deshpande P. N., *op. cit.* pp. 157-58
12. Pagadi Setu Madhavrao, *op. cit.* pp. 36-37
13. Deshpande P. N., *op. cit.* p. 143
14. *ibid.* pp. 146-47
15. Pagadi, *op. cit.* p. 287
16. Parasnis, *Marathe Sardar*
17. *ibid.*
18. Hasarat B., *Dara Shikoh : Life and Works*, pp. 260-68
19. Shejwalkar T. S., *Shri Shivchhatrapati*, p. 561
20. Rajwade V. K., *Marathyanchya Itihasachi Sadhane*, Vol. XVII, p. 17
21. Sardesai, *op. cit.* pp. 40-4 1
22. Grant Duff, *History of Marathas*, Vol. I, p. 129
23. Ather Ali, *The Mughal Nobility under Aurangjeb*, p. 30-31
24. *Hindu-Muslim Tanav va Jamatvadacha Dhoka*, Magova Prakashan, p.9
25. Shejwalkar, *op. cit.* pp. 356-57 and Pagadi, *op. cit.* p. 96
26. Mukhia H., 'Medieval Indian History and Communal Approach' in *Communalism and Writing of Indian History*, p. 34
27. Capon, *Marathyanchi Bakhar*
28. Ramchandrapant Amatya, *op. cit.* p. 27
29. Sabhasad, *op. cit. p.* 33
30. Pagadi, *op. cit.* p. 39

31. Deshpande, *op. cit.* pp. 199-200
32. Garge S. M., Aurangjeb, *Jizia Kar va Shivaji Maharaj,* pp. 153-55 and Kamble B. R., *Shivaji and his Times*
33. Shejwalkar, *op. cit.* p. 502
34. Sarkar, *op. cit.* pp. 205-06 and 211-13
35. Deshpande, *op. cit.* p. 167
36. Sabhasad, *op. cit.* p. 33
37. Sarkar, *op. cit.* pp. 202-06
38. *ibid.* pp 214-15
39. Pagadi, *op. cit.* p. 69
40. Mahatma Jyotiba Phule, *Phule Yanche Samagra Vangmaya* (ed. Keer va Malshe), pp. 7-38
41. Patwardhan S., *Bundelyanchi Bakhar,* p. 1
42. Sabhasad, *op. cit.* 21
43. Bhavare N. G., 'Castes, Favours, Patronage and Privileges under Shivaji's Rule', in Kamble B. R. (ed.) *op. cit.* pp. 186-237
44. Sabhasad, *op. cit.* p. 65

Some Important Books on Shivaji

1. D. V. Kale, *Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj,* Pune Vidyapeeth, Pune, 1961
2. A. A. Keluskar, *Shri Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj Yanche Charitra*
3. G. S. Sardesai, *Shakakarta Shivaji,* K. B. Dhavale, Mumbai, 1935
4. A. R. Kulkarni, *Shivkalin Maharashtra,* Shivaji University, Kolhapur, 1977
5. V. K. Rajwade, *Aitihasik Prastavana,* Chitrashala Press, Pune
6. Lalji Pendse, *Dharma ki Kranti,* Lalji Pendse, Mumbai, 1942
7. S. A. Dange, *Bara Bhashane,* Abhinav Prakashan, Mumbai, 1975
8. D. K. Bedekar, *Samyukta Maharashtra,* Chitrashala Press, Pune, 1947
9. T. S. Shejwalkar, *Shivcharitra - Prastavana va Arakhada,* Maratha Mandir, Mumbai, 1964
10. D. G. Godse, *Shakti Saushthav,* Popular Prakashan, Mumbai, 1978
11. D. G. Godse, *Sammade Talash,* Popular Prakashan, Mumbai, 1980
12. P. N. Deshpande, *Shivaji Maharajanchi Patre*
13. Sharad Joshi et al, *Shetkaryancha Raja Shivaji,* Shetkari Prakashan, Raigad
14. Jayant Gadkari, *Shivaji : Lok Kalyankari Raja*
15. Rajaramshastri Bhagwat, *Marathyasambandhiche Char Bol*
16. Narhar Kurundkar, *Shivaji Maharajanche Jeevan Rahasya*
17. Sarkar J. N., *Shivaji and his Times,* Orient Longman, Delhi, 1973
18. Sen S. N., *The Administrative System of Marathas,* Calcutta, 1925
19. Ranade M. G., *The Rise of Maratha Power,* Punalekar and Sons, Bombay, 1902
20. G. B. Sardar, *Sant Vangmayachi Samajik Phalashruti*
21. Pagadi Setu Madhavrao, *Chhatrapati Shivaji,* Continental Prakashan, Pune, 1974

Comrade Govind Pansare: A Tribute

Veteran Communist leader, trade unionist and prominent critic of right-wing forces, Comrade Govind Pansare, was attacked by motor-bike borne assailants on February 16, 2015 as he was returning from his morning walk along with his wife. He suffered multiple gunshot wounds and died of his injuries five days later.

There have been continuing protests not just in Maharashtra but across the country against this cowardly attack. Yet, more than a month after the killing, the police have failed to arrest the assailants, and the wider conspiracy behind the murder of this iconic leader remains to be unravelled. On March 11, three weeks after his death, tens of thousands of people converged in Mumbai to protest against the government's failure to track the killers of Govind Pansare (and Narendra Dabholkar).

Pansare was born on November 26, 1933 in Kolhar village of Shrirampur taluka, Ahmednagar district, into a farmers' family. The family lived in poverty, having lost their farmland to moneylenders. His mother worked as a farm hand and his father worked odd jobs to make ends meet. After completing his primary education in his village and secondary education at Rahuri in Ahmednagar, Govind Pansare moved to Kolhapur for higher studies, where he did BA (Hons) and LLB. After initially working as a newspaper vendor, a peon in the Municipality, a primary teacher in the Municipal School Board, and then as Associate Professor in Shivaji University, he started practising as a labour advocate in 1964. He went on to become one of Kolhapur's most renowned lawyers, and was the president of Kolhapur lawyers' Bar Association for many years.

Comrade Pansare was attracted to social movements since his school days. He was initially active with Rashtra Seva Dal, and later joined the Communist Party of India (CPI). He was the state secretary of the CPI for ten years, and was a member of the party's national executive. Pansare participated in the Samyukta Maharashtra and Goa freedom struggles. He was an uncompromising fighter for the rights of the most marginalised sections of society. He participated and led hundreds of struggles of the working people, especially the movements of the unorganised sector workers, such as farm labourers, domestic helps, auto-rickshaw drivers, milk producers, slum dwellers and others. Recently, he was also actively involved in the anti-toll agitation in Kolhapur.

He was a very prolific writer and wrote several books. He was also an indefatigable propagandist for peace and secularism. One of his most popular writings was a book on Chatrapati Shivaji, *Shivaji Kaun Hota?*. Basing himself on historical documents, Pansare showed in this book that Shivaji was a secular and people's king, who was loved by the poor. This was in striking contrast to the interpretation of Shivaji made popular by communal elements who portray Shivaji primarily as an anti-Muslim king. Pansare, through his painstaking research, presented the true picture of Shivaji in his book. Communal outfits were strongly opposed to this secular portrayal of Shivaji, and had repeatedly tried to obstruct the sale of this book, despite which the book has gone into several editions, multiple translations and has sold over 1.5 lakh copies.

With the rise of right-wing forces in the country, and their coming to power both at the Centre and in Maharashtra state, Comrade Pansare had launched an aggressive campaign to expose their real pro-corporate and anti-people agenda. Pansare had received numerous threats for his bold stand against right-wing forces. Only recently, he had been threatened with dire consequences during a lecture in Shivaji University, where he had condemned the glorification of Nathuram Godse, Gandhi's killer, by Hindutva organisations in strong words.

Another issue on which Comrade Pansare had invited the ire of Hindu fundamentalists was his plan to organise discussion meetings on a book on the slain chief of the Maharashtra anti-terrorism squad, Hemant Karkare. The book, "Who Killed Karkare?" written by a retired Inspector General of Police, alleges the involvement of Hindu extremist forces in the killing of Karkare. In October 2008, the ATS led by Karkare had arrested 11 suspects, all alleged Hindu terrorists, in the Malegaon blast case.

Who Would Want to Kill such a Gem of a Human Being?

In this context, it is important to recall that the murder of Comrade Pansare bears uncanny similarity to the murder of another such popular activist, Dr. Narendra Dabholkar, exactly one and a half years earlier. He too was shot by motor-cycle borne goons while out on a morning walk. The police have yet to trace his assassins too.

While there have been several murders of activists in the past decades, such as those of the CPI trade union leader and MLA Krishna Desai in Mumbai in 1970, the leader of the Dalli Rajhara mines' workers Shankar Guha Niyogi in Chhattisgarh in 1991, and the Mumbai trade union leader Datta Samant in 1997, the murders of Dabholkar and Pansare are indicative of something much more sinister, the rise of fascism in the country.

The Growing Fascist Threat

Ever since the Indian economy became entrapped in foreign debt crisis and the Indian government signed an agreement with the World Bank to open up the Indian economy to unrestrained inflows of foreign capital and goods, all the successive governments that have come to power at the Centre have assiduously implemented the World Bank-dictated economic agenda. However, these policies have only worsened the country's external and internal economic crisis. They have led to rising inflation, worsening unemployment, a huge increase in poverty and destitution, and a worsening agricultural crisis that has pushed a quarter-of-a-million farmers to committing suicide over the past decade. Taking advantage of the people's anger against the economic policies of the Congress-led UPA government, the BJP launched a slick propaganda campaign funded by the country's leading corporate houses, promising the people 'better days' (achhe din). Not realising the implications of voting fascist forces to power, the people voted the BJP-led NDA government to power in the elections to the 16th Lok Sabha held in April-May last year.

Since coming to power, the BJP has expectedly been implementing the very same policies of the previous UPA government, only at a much faster pace. But simultaneously, it has started implementing a most regressive fascist social agenda. It has been promoting the most backward, feudal, unscientific, irrational and even Brahminical values among the people. The RSS, that has now come out from behind the curtain and openly controls the BJP, and the dozens of organisations spawned by it, are pushing ahead their communal agenda with great speed. In flagrant violation of the secular spirit of the Indian Constitution, Mohan Bhagwat, the RSS Sarsanghchalak, recently stated that "Hindutva is the identity of India and it has the capacity to swallow other identities." In Cuttack, he asserted that India is a Hindu state and "citizens of Hindustan should be known as Hindus." Leaders of the ruling party are openly demanding that the Gita be decreed as a 'national book'. As if in synchrony, the government too cleverly initiated a debate on removing the words 'Secular' and 'Socialist' from the Preamble of the Indian Constitution.

Cadres of the Vishwa Hindu Parishad, the Bajrang Dal and scores of other sister-groups have intensified their intimidating campaigns like 'Ghar Wapsi' and 'Love-Jihad'. They are brazenly attacking places of worship of religious minorities. Dalit and tribal Christians are being physically attacked and socially ostracised. Hundreds of incidents of communal violence have taken place since the new government assumed power.

Another disturbing agenda of the Sangh Parivar being nakedly promoted by the Modi government is saffronisation of education. The process of filling important research, educational and cultural institutions and committees with people associated with the Hindutva agenda has begun. The government pressurised the director of the Indian Council of Historical Research Prof. Parvin Sinclair to resign and replaced her by Y. Sudarshan Rao, who has openly eulogised the caste system. Baldev Sharma, former editor of the RSS mouthpiece, Panchjanya, has been appointed the Chairman of the National Book Trust.

Even more serious, divisive, and promoting communal

hatred are the pronouncements by BJP leaders and leaders of other wings of the RSS valorising people like Dhananjay Desai, who is in jail for instigating people to murder a Muslim youth in Pune, and Nathuram Godse, the killer of Mahatma Gandhi.

While the Hindutva brigade led by the RSS is denying its involvement in the murders of Dr. Narendra Dabholkar and Comrade Govind Pansare, *there is no doubt that it is the atmosphere of hate, intolerance and violence being created by the RSS and its various wings that has given birth to the fascist goons who committed these murders.*

The murders of Dr. Dabholkar and Com. Govind Pansare are indicators of the growing offensive of fascist forces in the country. Fascist right-wing forces are out to strangulate and silence voices that are speaking out in defence of rationalism, secularism, democracy and socialism, fundamental tenets of the Indian Constitution. We, on behalf of Socialist Party (India) and Lokayat, strongly condemn these killings, salute these stalwarts, and reiterate our resolve to advance the struggle for which they laid down their lives.

Lokayat
Socialist Party (India)

Contact phones

Neeraj Jain	94222 20311
Dr. Abhijit Vaidya	
Alka Joshi	94223 19129
Adv. Santosh Mhaske	98222 50065

Website & E-mail

www.lokayat.org.in lokayat.india@gmail.com

Facebook

www.facebook.com/lokayat.india

Contact Address

Lokayat, opp. Syndicate Bank,
Law College Road, Near Nal Stop, Pune – 4.

Many begin with the bias of the so-called present day conflict between the Hindus and Musalmans. These people go on searching for this false and improper conflict, a phantom of their imagination, in the past history. Therefore, some like to look at Shivaji as a Hindu king. In point of fact, in Shivaji's own life, there is no place for such religious conflict. He himself never claimed to be fighting for the creation of a Hindu theological state. He neither desired to establish a state that followed the Hindu religious dictats of Shruti-smruti-puranas, nor did he try to do so. He had several Muslim officers, such as Daryasarang Dault Khan and Ibrahim Khan, working in his naval fleet. He had enlisted seven hundred Pathans who had left Vijapur to join him. He himself tried to the utmost to give protection to all Muslim religious places. He stood against Aurang Zeb, on the chessboard of politics, but reminded the latter of his grandfather Akbar's greatness. His relations with Qutb Shahi were generally cordial and friendly. We can look at this from another angle. The lords and feudatories he had to fight all his life were not merely those who belonged to his religion. They were his blood relations. The lords such as Ghorpade, Nimbalkar, Jadhav, Savant, Surve were always ranged against him. Two questions have always intrigued historians. Why were the lords and people of his own religion opposed to him? Why did millions of common people look up to him as an incarnation of God? The answer to both these questions is the same.

Narhar Kurundkar

In the person of Shivaji appeared the ideal king of people's imagination. Shivaji abolished with lightening speed the old fiefs. He got rid of old tax systems. He abolished unlimited restrictions enforced upon the peasants and put a halt to the system of awarding tax collection contracts. Land to every tiller, stability to the tenants, tax on actual produce only and landlords not having right over peasants produce – These were Shivaji's economic reforms.

Comrade S. A. Dange